No time to play

School counselors comment on the effects of the growing trend to eliminate recess

BY ANGELA KENNEDY

What if you had to work eight hours without a break? No midmorning second cup of coffee. No idle chitchat around the water cooler about what happened on Lost last night. No five-minute mental vacation in the afternoon. Just work.

Call the union! Hit the picket line! Take this job and (you know the rest).

That’s exactly what many schools are asking of their students, eliminating recess as a scheduled part of the school day. Last year, the National Parent Teacher Association partnered with the Cartoon Network to launch Rescuing Recess, a campaign to get parents, teachers, children's advocates and even kids to help ensure that recess still gets its due time somewhere between reading, writing and arithmetic.

According to www.RescuingRecess.com, more than 40 percent of elementary schools nationwide have eliminated or greatly shortened students’ playtime. Due to budget cuts, lack of supervisory staff and an increased focus on academic standards and test scores, millions of American children no longer scamper across the schoolyard to play dodge ball, hot potato or freeze tag. But school counselors agree that recess is more than just “free time.” They claim it’s a necessary outlet for children to develop emotionally, cognitively, socially and — of growing concern, since one out of five children is now obese — physically.

“I’ve been arguing for years that play is a critical component to childhood,” says Christopher Sink, an expert in child development and a counselor educator at Seattle Pacific University. “The research is contrary to what (schools) are doing. I think the reason why they are cutting recess is that they want more instructional time. They are not

Charter schools: Threat or opportunity?

Many believe the charter school movement is destined to grow, and the implications for school counselors are intriguing

BY JONATHAN ROLLINS

“What if a school counselor was in on the ground floor of designing a public school?” asks counselor educator Robert Urofsky. “What would we do with that opportunity?” Those questions, in combination with his interest in the school reform movement and school choice, led Urofsky to examine whether school counselors had a presence in charter schools.

Urofsky, an assistant professor and school counseling program coordinator in the Counselor Education Department at Clemson University, found that little information existed concerning counseling services in charter schools, so he launched his own national survey to get what he calls a “snapshot picture.” Of the 174 charter schools in 28 states that reported data to Urofsky, 44 percent said they employed school counselors. Many of the remaining schools provided an array of different titles (31 in all) to describe the position of school counselor, including teacher, art therapist, academic adviser and so on. “It’s one of those areas where it’s clear that there is an existing misperception of who school counselors are and what they are capable of doing,” says Urofsky,

Continued on page 26

Continued on page 24
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Penn State to host Center for Study of College Student Mental Health

Senior staff members at Penn State University’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) recently announced that the university will administer the new Center for the Study of College Student Mental Health. The center’s goal is to create a nationwide data-sharing network of college and university counseling centers that will enable real-time tracking and analysis of the state of mental health among U.S. students in higher education who seek mental health services.

“The center will address a critical gap in the research on college student mental health: the ability to accurately and routinely describe the state of university and college counseling centers on a national level, as measured by standardized data,” said Ben Locke, assistant director of research and technology at CAPS and national coordinator of the new center’s effort.

“Outside of some end-of-year surveys that provide information about counseling centers or clientele,” said CAPS Director Dennis Hetzmann, “there has never been an effort that offers regular, recurrent, real-time information on the students that we serve. Consequently, we will be able to track trends, outcomes and student reactions to major crises at the campus level and also at the national level.”

CAPS hosted a nationwide conference in late April that was attended by more than 70 directors and leaders of college and university counseling centers. At the conference, participants identified issues central to the management of the proposed Center for the Study of College Student Mental Health.

Counseling center directors showed a willingness to help guide the development of a nationally standardized software infrastructure that will gather data nationally from participating counseling centers and convert it for use by clinicians, administrators, researchers and public.

Initially, the new center plans to issue automated reports on a routine basis, most likely following a semester schedule. Eventually, however, the hope is that researchers will be able to request real-time data based on specific criteria. To learn more about the proposed center, visit www.sa.psu.edu/caps/research_center.shtml.

The Last Word

“Well-intentioned parents have become overly involved in their kids’ lives, planning their time and solving their dilemmas. By the time these kids enter college, they have no confidence in speaking up for themselves.”

— Counselor and author Susan Fee (see “Dorm duty,” p. 16)

By the Numbers: Median Annual Earnings

The graph illustrates the median annual earnings of educational, vocational and school counselors, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2004. A) Vocational rehabilitation counselors ($27,800); B) Individual and family counselors ($30,240); C) Counselors employed with colleges, universities and professional schools ($39,110); D) Junior college counselors ($45,730); and E) Elementary and secondary school counselors ($51,160).

Receive disaster mental health training

ACA recognizes that the need for mental health services is heightened in the aftermath of both natural and manmade disasters. That’s why the association will once again be offering the American Red Cross “Foundations of Disaster Mental Health” training at the ACA Convention in Detroit. The training will take place on Thursday, March 22, 2007, from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

To qualify for this training, counselors must be a member of ACA and be licensed for independent practice by a state counseling licensure board. Please note that in a two-tier state, counselors must be licensed at the higher, independent practice level. Counselors must have a valid practicing license at the time of training. It is also highly recommended that counselors take the American Red Cross “Introduction to Disaster Services” course online at www.redcross.org (from the home page, click on Disaster Services,” and look for the course title).

Counselors must preregister to attend the disaster mental health training at the ACA Convention by Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2007. To register, contact Holly Clubb, manager of ACA Learning Resources, at hclubb@counseling.org or 800.347.6647 ext. 229. There are 6.5 CEUs offered for completing this training.

Participate in upcoming ACA election

Each year, ACA members have an opportunity to participate in the work of the association by voting in the annual election of officers. To be eligible to participate, you must be a member in good standing of ACA or the division for which you are voting by Nov. 1. Your membership renewal must be received by Oct. 13 to ensure that it can be processed on time. You can call ACA Member Services at 800.347.6647 ext. 222 to make sure your membership is up to date.
Readers weigh in on ethics issues related to conversion therapy

I wanted to express my appreciation for the article about ethical issues related to conversion or reparative therapy in the July 2006 issue of Counseling Today. Much conflict and shrillness has been generated by each “side” of the ongoing debate about the use and efficacy of controversial treatments such as “reparative” therapy. Too often the critical ethical issues of the client’s right to choose are lost in the emotional reactions of hopefully well-meaning professional counselors expressing strong feelings. I ask my students to struggle with the ethical dilemma of a client having treatment goals that are at odds with what they, as counselors, would set for the client. The authors of this article address this issue in a concise manner with both clarity and professionalism.

I share the authors’ viewpoint that there is an ethical danger of counselors misusing the “undue influence” of the counseling relationship to manipulate clients into lifestyle changes they did not present as treatment goals. Those of us on each side of the issue of same-sex attraction must be guided by the ACA Code of Ethics to prevent this from damaging our clients and our profession.

I am concerned, however, that some of the authors’ points may have inadvertently reinforced some misconceptions about the specialty of Christian counseling. The authors note that “within various religious and cultural communities... same-sex attractions and behaviors are still viewed as pathological.” This premise was followed with the statement that “to refer a client to someone who engages in conversion therapy communicates to the client that his/her same-sex attractions and behaviors are disordered and, therefore, need to be changed.”

I do not assume that I represent all professionals approaching counseling from a Christian world view. We are a diverse group and celebrate that diversity. However, as a Christian counselor, I can clarify that rather than viewing same-sex attraction as “pathological” or “disordered,” I see this as a treatment issue that is part of the overall presentation of the individual seeking treatment. I will address same-sex attraction as a treatment issue if this is an appropriate part of the client’s treatment and if the client presents it as such. If a client seeks to change his/her same-sex attraction and this is not a type of treatment with which I am competent, I am ethically required to refer the client. Rather than communicating that the client’s attraction or behavior is “pathological,” I am reinforcing that the client’s treatment goals are valid.

I would rather that the authors had focused more directly on the treatment of what we used to call “ego dystonic” same-sex attraction. The introduction of “conversion or reparative therapy” has the potential of being a red herring in their argument, distracting them from the larger ethical issues of responding to clients who have treatment goals at odds with our own values. I agree with the authors that it is a delicate ethical balance to refer a client to a treatment for which the empirical literature is either unsupported or equivocal at best. They make a well-reasoned argument for empowering the client to make an informed choice based on balanced and accurate information provided by the referring counselor.

Finally, I appreciate the open dialogue represented by this article. This side of heaven, we cannot expect to reach perfect consensus, especially with regard to such emotionally charged issues as same-sex attraction. However, I have hope that we can respectfully dialogue in ways that bring more light than heat to the ethical conduct of counseling. I am thankful to the American Counseling Association Ethics Committee for its ongoing work to bring balance and guidance to an ever-changing profession.

Lorrie A. Wetherbee
Associate Professor of Pastoral Counseling
Ashland Theological Seminary
Ashland, Ohio

The article “Exploring ethical issues related to conversion or reparative therapy” appeared in the July 2006 issue of Counseling Today. I will begin with the stand...

The article started with the case of an individual who tells his therapist that he is gay and wants to change his lifestyle dramatically to a heterosexual lifestyle. He asks for a referral to a “conversion therapist.” While I agree with the conclusions, the authors related towards the counselor’s ethical obligations. The route they propose in getting there troubles me. I understand the appropriateness of citing good research on the topic, but I wonder why they so quickly dismiss the moral dilemmas clients face when certain religious beliefs are at the root of the desire for change. The implication is that these beliefs are irrelevant because the counselor’s obligation is to provide “scientifically based” therapies, as though these therapies are somehow value-free. The counselor is thus obliged to tell the client that his values/beliefs are not worth considering.

As to the legislative agenda, I was slightly surprised to read that ACA is actively lobbying in support of legislation supporting civil union status for homosexual persons. I say “slightly” because I have had too long worn blinders to the fact that the organization was heading in this direction in spite of the fact that many counselors are Christians. Many therapists who are Christian (and not necessarily Christian counselors) believe that homosexual behavior is immoral. I am not proposing that the organization should support the Christian position; I am suggesting that to be truly inclusive, the organization should not endorse either position. Because my dues go to support ACA lobbying efforts, I regret that I will be unable to renew my membership next year.

Arthur C. Lowitzer
Littleton, Colo.
chucking62@hotmail.com

The article “Exploring ethical issues related to conversion or reparative therapy” is full of double standards. The premise of the article seems to be that any therapy geared toward helping clients explore their potential for heterosexual identity is almost assuredly misguided at best and more likely harmful. The attempt to tie this conclusion to research is disingenuous and unsuccessful.
From the President – BY MARIE A. WAKEFIELD

Safeguarding excitement

Every year students return to school with a set of high expectations and a will to conquer new challenges. There is an energized feeling among students and those who recently graduated to initiate a professional connection with the American Counseling Association. Recently, I had the opportunity to communicate with some of these individuals who will be carrying our profession into the middle of this century.

Given all the changes we are experiencing in social systems and society-at-large, I wanted to know how those coming after my generation would face up to the challenges with their clients, their students and their professional colleagues. In other words, are they excited, pragmatic, cautious, hesitant or looking forward to what they will experience?

What I found is that those with whom I spoke are definitely looking forward to being engaged and active in their profession. Here is what they shared.

Melissa Luke
While I am certain that I cannot yet fully appreciate how the related responsibilities of simultaneous dissertation study, transitioning into a new role at my university and job hunting will collectively consume the majority of my time and attention, it is also my hope to remain actively involved in professional service this year. I have already experienced the rewards of meaningful professional contributions through my involvement in ACA, ACES (the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision) and the International Interdisciplinary Conference on Clinical Supervision. I am looking forward to getting busy with our chapter’s professional advocacy work!

Amie Manis
The phrase “back to school” has evoked butterflies, hopes, dreams and goals, and a sense of excitement for as long I can remember. The emotional collage the words elicit this year includes looking forward to approaching the fall semester as a returning student; excitement around clarifying my dissertation topic; as well as new teaching and clinical placements; appreciation for the opportunity to learn from and serve with members of ACA’s Governing Council; and renewed motivation for pursuing the hope of making a professional contribution to the promotion of social justice.

Valerie Sotardi
As a new school counseling graduate student, I am most excited about the course curriculum. I am most interested in the course named "Counseling Children with Special Needs." I have always enjoyed working with children and believe that this course will provide me with the skills necessary to help children overcome their challenges.

Sarah Lanman
I have finished my first year of doctoral studies. I am very excited about the Professional Standards Committee work. I have spent much time during the past academic year discussing and analyzing the role of counselors within our troubled society. I volunteered to collate the committee’s comments on the CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs) standards so that I could really digest and organize everyone’s thoughts and ideas and also make my own suggestions. This work will also help fuel my work as a Chi Sigma Iota president. I am looking forward to getting busy with our chapter’s professional advocacy work!

Michael Brubaker
I am just learning the ropes in a new school setting. It has been exciting to me to join a counselor education department with such strong faculty members and a variety of research interests. It is my hope to learn as much as I can from them and continue to develop my research in the areas of homelessness and poverty.

I am very pleased to be a part of the Awards Committee this year, and in like fashion, I plan to learn as much as I can from the other members. The ACA Awards Committee has been granted the responsibility to honor the best of our profession for their achievements in the field. While some may think this recognition is primarily for the recipients, it is really for all of us. Together, we set the standards of excellence by choosing exceptional persons who are guiding our way in the counseling profession. In addition to learning from other members, my goal is to find ways to motivate others,
Recently, I attended a conference for association executives. A very dedicated leader of our group was being honored for the many accomplishments he had achieved on behalf of the profession during his long life. In explaining what he enjoyed about the association management profession, he shared a story of meeting up with an old friend in an airport. When he asked how this colleague was doing, the friend replied simply, “Still learning.” What a basic yet profound thing to say. It’s good to hear someone exclaim that after so many years on this planet, they’re “still learning.”

I know many of you who are starting your graduate studies or perhaps finishing up during this academic year are in the process of gaining the knowledge and experience you need to excel in the counseling profession. I salute you for your dedication to the profession you have chosen and for all the good things I know you will do both now and into the future. My hope as the academic year begins is that you will turn to the American Counseling Association for both resources and services. In addition, you should know that the leadership of the Graduate Students Association of ACA has been very busy looking at ways to enhance your experience by reviewing what the association can offer you.

It is also clear to me that lifelong learning is more than just a buzz phrase for ACA members. Our recent spike in publications sales, the number of early registrations for the Annual Convention in Detroit next March and the increasing growth in our continuing education courses and tests are all evidence that many of you truly are “still learning.”

With the constant changes in society, the evolving technologies that make us a global village and the need to provide counseling services to an ever-increasing group of children, adults and families, the work of the professional counselor is more important than ever. ACA wants to be your resource, your support and your place to network, providing a means for you to communicate with your peers. But we can do that effectively if we don’t know what you want. Over the next several months, I will continue to ask the question: “What do you need or want to help you be a better professional counselor?”

After all, this is YOUR professional association. We could easily “muddle” through and do business as usual for another 12 months, but you know what? That is no longer good enough for me. And I don’t think it is good enough for you either.

I heard recently that consumer products giant Procter & Gamble went through a “near death” experience financially before realizing that some really good ideas were out there that simply weren’t being brought to market. These ideas weren’t coming from the company’s own staff of engineers, researchers and marketing people, but from consumers, inventors and idea people who could help companies such as Procter & Gamble be competitive once again. This year, more than half of the corporate giant’s new products will have emerged from innovative thoughts and ideas generated outside the company. This synergy of outside ideas and inside resources (such as product development) has resulted in some very positive outcomes.

OK, what does all this have to do with ACA, its members and the counseling profession? It means that ACA needs to depend on you for the ideas, products and services that we develop. Through research and surveys, and with the help of our members contacting us, we should be able to bring more things to market that will mean something to you.

In addition, if you were to ask me how we were doing, I would like to say, “Still learning.” My challenge to you is to let the leadership and staff know what we can do to enhance your ACA experience. One of our goals this year is to reach a point where you won’t think twice when it comes time to renew your membership in ACA. We want you to renew not out of any sense of obligation but because you willingly want to be part of the largest organization in the world specifically dedicated to the counseling profession.

As always, I hope you will communicate any comments, questions or suggestions that you might have. Please contact me either via e-mail at ryep@counseling.org or by phone at 800.347.6647 ext. 231.

Thanks and be well.
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- Don Durkee, Ed.D., LPC, NCC

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CORE, CACREP announce intent to merge into single accrediting entity

BY JONATHAN ROLLINS

In a joint statement in late July, the Boards of Directors of both the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) announced their intent to merge into a new accrediting entity. The organizations voted at their respective board meetings in July to support a Memorandum of Understanding. This formally commits CACREP and CORE to enter into the process of developing an accreditation entity that brings together the best practices of both organizations. Before the organizations officially merge, however, both boards must still vote on a final merger proposal after it has been developed.

“It is important to note that the CACREP and CORE Boards enter into this process with great respect for the history and traditions of both organizations and a determination to preserve and promote both the common and unique strengths and potentials of each group,” said a joint statement released on behalf of the organizations’ boards by CACREP Board Chair Culbreth and CORE Board President Linda Shaw. “By combining efforts, both boards believe there is an opportunity not only to promote excellence in counselor education with a unified voice, but to also promote unified recognition for the counseling profession as a whole.”

According to the statement, the elected heads of both organizations will next appoint a joint task force to begin developing the new entity’s structure, procedures and processes, and an operational time line.

In agreeing to jointly answer questions from Counseling Today, Culbreth and Shaw acknowledged that merger conversations had taken place several times in previous years in board-level discussions. “Each time it was felt that the timing was not the best for moving forward,” they said in an e-mail to Counseling Today. “This version of the conversation began in 2004 with a candid discussion of the two organizations’ similarities and joint interests and has progressed to the point where each Board has voted to move forward with formal merger negotiations and discussions.”

One of the prime motivations for the proposed merger is that it should benefit and strengthen the counseling profession as a whole, Culbreth and Shaw said. “It is important that the counseling profession, in all areas, present a unified front,” they said in their e-mail. “It makes sense that the two organizations consider merger to further promote a single counseling profession. There are many professional counselors in the field who specialize in rehabilitation counseling but share the same base of knowledge in counseling as counselors within other specialty areas of practice. Unifying the training accreditation organizations will support both the overall counseling profession and rehabilitation counselors specifically. … We have a lot to learn from each other that we believe will make the accreditation process much stronger for all counseling programs.”

American Counseling Association President Marie A. Wakefield agreed that the proposed merger should strengthen the counseling profession. “The leadership of CACREP and CORE have taken a bold step in looking at ways to unify our profession, enhance the role of accreditation and ensure that quality counselor education programs are recognized,” she said. “I look forward to this ongoing development of the merger of two highly respected groups within our profession.”

The proposed merger also has the support of the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association, said ARCA President Erna Marini. “Many rehabilitation counselors and educators have proposed for some time now that rehabilitation counseling is one of the many specialized counseling organizations, with an emphasis on counseling persons with disabilities,” he said. “Some within our field and other organizations, however, viewed rehabilitation counseling as a specialization unto itself, not really perceiving it as a counseling specialization.”

This may have been true through the early eighties, he said, but rehabilitation counseling graduates have since refined and diversified the field by “branching into a more generic counseling labor market, including substance abuse, mental health, schools and universities, etc., (and) providing personal counseling.”

“A second benefit of the merger,” Marini continued, “is that many state licensing boards are more familiar with CACREP than with CORE, and a major premise behind the merger is to eventually have all states recognize that the quality of skills and education that rehabilitation counselors possess is the same as with any of the other counseling specializations. The merger will ideally make pursuing licensure for rehabilitation counseling graduates easier in the future. The final reason the merger will benefit the counseling profession as a whole is that the other specializations will benefit from learning more about rehabilitation counseling as a specialty area, with the hope that they may integrate greater information on disability issues into their curricula.”

Counseling Today will continue to report on the proposed merger between CACREP and CORE as the process develops.

Jonathan Rollins is the editor-in-chief of Counseling Today. Contact him at jrollins@counseling.org.

Letters to the editor: ctt@counseling.org
What do you think about No Child Left Behind?

BY CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL

The American Counseling Association needs your input. In 2007, Congress will begin the process of revising and updating the No Child Left Behind Act, the major law establishing federal aid to elementary and secondary schools. NCLB-authorized programs provide services such as guidance counseling, mental health services, violence prevention activities and academic advisement as well as professional development.

Like other major federal laws, NCLB is thoroughly updated and revised only once every five years. Consequently, school counselors and other education advocates will soon have a rare opportunity to influence federal education policy for years to come.

Although formal reauthorization of NCLB is not expected to take place until after the 2008 presidential election, Congress has begun holding hearings and staff discussions on the topic. Now is the time to begin laying the groundwork for changes to the law. It is important that we take advantage of NCLB’s reauthorization to continue educating Congress about the identity of school counselors and the value of the high-quality services they provide to help improve students’ lives and their academic achievement.

Congress will also be devoting considerable time and energy to discussing teacher qualifications and average class sizes; given the importance of counseling and its potential benefit to students, the school counseling profession warrants similar attention. NCLB reauthorization is not only an important vehicle that counselors can use to advocate for their clients but also a vital vehicle that counselors can use to protect the future of the school counseling profession. NCLB reauthorization is about ensuring a place for school counselors in America’s schools both now and for years to come. Throughout the reauthorization process, ACA will continue working with the American School Counselor Association, the School Social Work Association of America, the National Association of School Psychologists and other organizations in support of school counseling and related services.

In anticipation of the upcoming reauthorization of NCLB, the ACA Office of Public Policy and Legislation will be e-mailing an online survey to our school counselor members in September in an effort to get their input on NCLB and their suggestions for improving the law. We will also be asking counselors to share their own stories or personal experiences of working with children and youth. Feedback from the survey will be used to help develop ACA’s policy recommendations for the reauthorization of NCLB. In turn, these recommendations will be shared with Congress as it works to renew this important legislation.

If you are a school counselor who would like to provide ACA with either your feedback on NCLB or personal anecdotes about your work experiences, send an e-mail to NCLB Survey@counseling.org or call Chris Campbell in ACA’s Office of Public Policy and Legislation at 800.347.6647 ext. 241. If possible, please include your name and phone number in the e-mail, because we may ask counselors to share their stories and recommendations with specific senators and representatives.

Information about school counselors’ day-to-day experiences is valuable to both ACA and to members of Congress. Together we can make a difference!

Christopher Campbell is a government relations representative with the ACA Office of Public Policy and Legislation. Contact him at ccampbell@counseling.org.

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org

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Congress passes measure updating Perkins programs

More than a year after initial passage of bills in each chamber, Congress has passed a final version of legislation to renew federal career and technical education programs for another five years. The Senate passed S. 250, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, on July 26 by unanimous consent; the House of Representatives approved the measure by a vote of 399-1 three days later. Despite President George W. Bush’s previous proposals to eliminate the program, he is expected to sign the reauthorization bill into law shortly.

At nearly $1.3 billion annually, the programs authorized under the Perkins Act represent one of the largest federal investments in U.S. high schools. Perkins Act programs are a key component of secondary and postsecondary education systems. Between 2002 and 2004, enrollment in career and technical education programs rose by 26 percent nationally, and an estimated 45 percent of all high school graduates take three or more occupational courses.

According to the most recent National Assessment of Vocational Education, high school students earned about $450 more in income for each high school occupational course they took. The program continues to emphasize the importance of educational achievement: Almost two-thirds of all high school graduates of career and technical programs now enter some form of postsecondary education.

Of particular interest to counselors, the Perkins reauthorization bill:

- Maintains the Occupational and Employment Information program (also known as “Section 118”)
- Requires that state plans for use of Perkins Act funding identify how professional development will be provided, including training on use of occupational and employment information
- Maintains the improvement of career guidance and academic counseling programs as a permissible use of both state leadership funds and local funds
- Adds the provision of support for Section 118 activities as an allowable use of state leadership funds
- Requires local plans for use of Perkins dollars describe how career guidance and academic counseling services will be provided to students

In addition, the bill:

- Makes use of the term “career and technical education” throughout, replacing references to “vocational education”
- Maintains funding for state-level activities. Specifically, 10 percent of a state’s allocation can be spent on state leadership activities, while 5 percent can be spent on state administrative activities
- Maintains the Tech Prep program as a separate section within the bill with its own federal funding stream. However, states now will have the flexibility to combine all or a portion of their Tech Prep grant with funds received under the basic state grant.
- Allows students to enroll in Tech Prep programs that lead to an associate’s degree as early as the ninth grade

For more information, contact Chris Campbell at 800.347.6647 ext. 241 or via e-mail at ccampbell@counseling.org.

Congress feeling pressure to act on Medicare

For the fourth time in as many years, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are proposing to cut Medicare physician reimbursement rates through a formula established under current law. The proposal is to cut reimbursement rates by 5.1 percent in 2007.

Congress has consistently acted to prevent physician pay cuts from occurring, and anxiety over the impending cuts is creating pressure on Congress to do so again. Medical groups claim providers may decide to stop accepting Medicare clients if reimbursement rates drop too low.

Congressional action to forestall payment rate cuts for Medicare also opens the door for consideration of other changes to the program, including establishing Medicare coverage of licensed professional counselors. The American Counseling Association is working to have the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2006 (H.R. 5324/S. 784) included as part of any Medicare legislation enacted by Congress.

To increase our chances of success, we need to get House members to sign on as co-sponsors of H.R. 5324. You can help achieve this goal by taking just one minute to call your representative. For more information, read the “ACA Call to Action” on page 48.

In addition to enlisting our members’ help through calls and e-mails, ACA is also working to gain co-sponsors by bringing counselors to Washington, D.C., to meet with key U.S. representatives and by helping counselors arrange visits with representatives in their home states. For more information, e-mail ACA Legislative Representative Brian Altman at baltman@counseling.org or call him at 800.347.6647 ext. 242.
New requirement to have a transfer plan

Counseling Today is publishing a monthly column focusing on new aspects of the revised ACA Code of Ethics (available online at www.counseling.org/ethics). American Counseling Association Chief Professional Officer David Kaplan conducted the following interview with ACA Ethics Code Revision Task Force members Harriet Glosoff and Rocco Cottone.

Standard C.2.h.
Counselor Incapacitation or Termination of Practice

“When counselors leave a practice, they follow a prepared plan for transfer of clients and files. Counselors prepare and disseminate to an identified colleague or ‘records custodian’ a plan for the transfer of clients and files in the case of their incapacitation, death or termination of practice.”

David Kaplan: What was the genesis of the new ACA Code of Ethics standard for “Counselor Incapacitation or Termination of Practice”?

Harriet Glosoff: In our discussions about the new standard on safeguarding the confidentiality of a deceased client (B.3.f.), the Ethics Code Revision Task Force realized that the ACA Code of Ethics said nothing about the need to have a plan in place for assisting clients to transition to a new counselor or to obtain their records if the counselor left the practice, became incapacitated or died.

Rocco Cottone: Right! We began to see this as a proactive issue — the importance of educating practitioners on the need to plan ahead for the day their practice ends.

HG: Even beginning counselors need to have a transfer plan. You may be young, healthy and starting a new practice, and the last thing on your mind is thinking about illness or death. But what if you get hit by a car and can’t resume work for a month or more? Who will see your clients? There has to be a transfer plan in place to ensure that your clients have access to both counseling and their records during your period of incapacitation. This is important for all counselors, but it is especially critical in a private practice.

DK: What are some ways that you can see a client being harmed if a transfer plan is not in place when a counselor dies, becomes incapacitated or announces that he or she will soon be moving to a different part of the country?

HG: The most obvious issue for me revolves around clients who are in the midst of counseling and need continued treatment — especially clients in a fragile state. Dealing with the fact that your counselor has died, become disabled or is leaving in the middle of treatment can be very traumatic. It means that the client has to start from the beginning with a new counselor. A counselor without a transfer plan adds to that trauma, stress and anxiety by the lack of a referral process. The client may have no idea who to turn to. Clients may also have no clue as to how a new counselor can obtain their notes and records.

RC: From a rehabilitation counseling perspective, a client’s records can be critical for an application or reapplication for disability through a state agency, worker’s compensation or Social Security. Having those records unavailable could cause much harm to a client.

DK: Are there any horror stories you know of?

RC: A former counselor in my community was in private practice and passed away. When she died, all of her private practice notes and files were thrown in the trash by her partner. The counselor had no transfer plan, and therefore had no means of communicating what should happen to those records.

The partner, who was a painter by trade, had to make the decision and just decided to pitch the notes. I spoke to him afterward and told him that he should have kept those records. His response was that he was not a counselor and therefore was not under any obligation to

Continued on page 41
It’s not about the cat

My husband’s aunt collects cats. She thinks she’s helping them. Recently, we were up at the family farm and discovered five new litters of kittens – most of them feral. They were scattered from the back porch to the back meadow.

We came upon one of her little bundles of fur lingering in the grass, curled in misery and paws tensed in pain. It didn’t run like its siblings. It was too weak to move. Blood was coming out of both its eyes. My husband’s aunt had been “doctoring” it with boric acid solution, but it was obvious the cat had long been terminal. She said she had no money for the vet. So my husband did what he had always done in the mountains with a suffering animal: He shot it.

Now my husband is a cat person who dearly loves little kittens. But he hates suffering and was sure this would be like any of the other merciful acts he has ever committed. He did not expect what followed. He was deeply, completely traumatized and could not believe what he had done. But it wasn’t about the cat — it was about how far off the beaten path of sanity his family had come.

His reaction came on like a slow rumble. Then came the horror. Twenty or 30 years of memories came flooding over him, and he suddenly broke like a long-stressed dam. We broke the way sane people do when they look at insanity for too long. Like Nietzsche floating out over a man beating a horse in the eyes, we screamed in agony at the sheer horror and frustration of it all. Was my husband really related to this? It was all so surreal.

He wept. He wept for all the years of watching his family deteriorate mentally. He wept for all the dreams that would never be realized. He wept for all the effort it had taken to try — and ultimately fail — to give them a better life. He wept for this legacy that he had passed on to his children.

I did no better. Somewhere inside of me came a storm, and then the last straw holding it back broke. But it wasn’t about the cat. This storm had been 18 years in the making. I saw him convulsing over the death of this poor animal. I watched him suffer. It turned my horror to rage. I was incensed that his family could be so far gone. How do good, moral, “Christian” people get this way? Where or when do they derail?

I screamed at them that they were mentally ill; that “educated people don’t live like this. They take sick animals to the vet and have them put to sleep!” But I see now that it wasn’t about the cat.

After the cat was dead, my husband’s aunt claimed she had been planning to take it to the vet. She said she had no money for the vet. My husband’s aunt started feeding it. Over the years they had hoarded newspapers, plastic bags, old magazines, milk jugs, books, coffee jars, baskets, clothing, food, plants, seeds, rotten material, yarn, string, tires and, yes, now cats.

The aunt started feeding it. Over the years they had hoarded newspapers, plastic bags, old magazines, milk jugs, books, coffee jars, baskets, clothing, food, plants, seeds, rotten material, yarn, string, tires and, yes, now cats.

The cat thing happened slowly. One pregnant stray showed up at the barn 15 years ago, and the aunt started feeding it. Over the years, with constant feeding, the numbers have risen and fallen, sometimes reaching as high as 50. The overpopulation results in terrible fights for territory. The runs are constantly seen licking their wounds and pus-filled eyes. And sometimes there are huge litters of inbred weaklings whose defective genes inevitably leave them to fall prey to owls, foxes, bigger cats, various wild predators and illness. They may be sick, but the grandchildren play with them. Tumors may appear, but they pay it no mind. There’s no money for the vet. So the animals just live on — sometimes in terrible agony — while “help” comes every night with a 6 o’clock feeding.

When is it too much? When has it gone too far? But this isn’t about the cat. It is about educated people making excuses for why their eccentricities get out of hand. It’s about reckless endangerment. It’s about moral obligations and the spread of disease. No, it’s not about the cat. It is about public health and compassion. It’s about not recognizing limits and unsanitary conditions. It’s about not knowing when something dangerous has gone too far.

This hoarding is an irrational thought process that leads individuals into an overwhelming situation that they cannot reverse. They don’t know how to stop it — and they refuse to let anyone try to help them because they have done it for so long that it seems normal to them now. It’s an obsessive-compulsive bent. But who is the victim — the perpetrator, the witness or the cat? When do we step in and make it stop? Is it only an issue if it affects someone else? Do animals count? Should we just mind our own business?

Beyond the simple catharsis of that dramatic episode, a truly positive thing happened to my husband and I: We walked away from the experience forever changed. At the age of not yet 50, we came home and wrote a contract giving our daughter and son-in-law permission (in case we ever head down that path) to step in and take away our hoard-
BIG GIRLS
DON'T CRY

Truth or Dire Consequences?

Anna's mother had battled terminal cancer for a year, but Anna was still she had when her mom finally died. She came home from the hospital and went as she told her 8-year-old daughter that grandma had died. But her husband pulled her out of the room and told her to get a hold of herself. He said she needed to be strong for their daughter, and not feel sorry for herself.

She called her best friend who told her, "Don't cry you should be happy that she's no longer suffering." So she tried to hold back her tears and put on a happy face. When her sadness continued, she called her pastor who said, "Don't feel bad, she's in a better place."

It may be intellectually accurate that Anna's mom was no longer suffering and was in a better place. But the same was not true for Anna. Anna was heartbroken and definitely NOT in a better place. All the comments she heard, no matter how well-intended, told her that she shouldn't feel what she felt.

The attempt to shut grievers from their naturally occurring emotions to their intellect is dangerous and counter-productive. Our reliance on intellect in the absence of feelings has reached epidemic proportions—especially where grief is concerned.

BE STRONG OR BE HUMAN
Don't cry. Be strong. Don't feel bad. Everything Anna heard put her in conflict with what was truthful about her feelings.

Because she didn't have better information to guide her, Anna believed that something was wrong with her and she shouldn't be feeling what she was feeling. She didn't cry at the funeral because everyone told her that she needed to be strong for her daughter. Her daughter, watching and learning from her mother, didn't cry either.

TIPPLES NOT TRANQUILIZERS
As Anna kept pretending to be fine, she began suffering from everyone. She noticed that she had almost no energy. In desperation, she went to her doctor, who diagnosed her as depressed and prescribed a heavy dose of medication.

The drugs numbed the pain and allowed Anna to bury her feelings even deeper. Her marriage suffered, and her daughter was a free-fall of her own. All of this occurred in large part, because Anna had learned to be strong and hide her emotions. And worse, she inadvertently taught the same wrong idea to her daughter.

Perhaps Anna would have done better if allowed to cry at the first place.

EXPAND YOUR PRACTICE

While crying is normal and natural and helpful in dealing with the emotional energy caused by the death of a loved one, it's obviously not everything that Anna would need to do to become emotionally complete with her mother. Nor is crying the only thing her daughter would need to do to deal with the unrealized hopes, dreams and expectations she had for her future that would have included her grandmother.

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The saying goes that time heals all wounds, but for three University of New Orleans (UNO) graduate counseling students whose homes were flooded when the levees broke after Hurricane Katrina, the memories are still painful. At the same time, the three students — each from a different walk of life and each with different viewpoints — share a hope for their future, a hope for their families’ future and a hope for the city of New Orleans itself.

Theresa Phillips

Theresa Phillips was living an upbeat single’s life in a loft apartment in east New Orleans at this time last year. She was in her second year of the doctoral program at UNO and active in her community and sorority. Hurricane warnings came and went but no longer disrupted her routine; they were simply a way of life on the Gulf Coast.

In 2001, her first year at school as an undergrad, Phillips had been new to the area and a bit nervous about hurricanes. At first she evacuated each time a storm was predicted to approach, often beating a four-hour retreat back to her parents’ home in Mississippi. “But that became such a hassle,” she says. “I would call back to friends in the city, and they would say, ‘Nothing happened. The sun is shining.’”

But four years later, and now a veteran of hurricane warnings, Phillips wasn’t going to let talk of Katrina scare her away so easily. The week of the storm, she went about her normal life, running errands, attending sorority meetings, going to work and classes.

By Saturday, news of the approaching hurricane was harder to ignore. Phillips’ friends and family, knowing she now tended to ride out the storms, were calling and asking her to leave. Begrudgingly, she packed a few things and headed to Mobile, Ala., which was close enough for her to be back at school for a Tuesday night statistics class.

“I knew I was coming back that Tuesday,” she says. “I was really involved with that course trying to understand it, so I didn’t want to miss it.” But as Katrina’s true impact began revealing itself in the days following the hurricane, Phillips heard that no one was getting back into New Orleans. She finally drove to Mississippi to stay with her parents and began making alternate plans for work and school.

The University of Memphis was the closest school with a doctoral program in counseling, so Phillips arranged for a temporary transfer and also took some courses online from UNO. For the next three months, she worked with other displaced students at Memphis, counseling them and helping them to adjust.

“It was helpful for me and for the students,” she says. “Once they found out that I was also from New Orleans and an evacuee, they felt comfortable talking with me. Though I was going through a lot of what they were going through, I felt connected because I didn’t have closure in New Orleans. I didn’t get a chance to say goodbye or pack up. Just meeting with those students helped me.”

Phillips returned to New Orleans in January, but her apartment was condemned. She managed to stay with friends until the university made arrangements for faculty and staff to live in the Marriott downtown. For the next four months, the hotel was home. She tried to stay busy with her graduate assistant responsibilities and with her job at Southern University at New Orleans, where she counseled students still coping with Katrina and helped them work out their course schedules.

Because she had been renting and didn’t own a home in the city, she qualified for a trailer from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Since April, she has been living on the temporary campus of Southern University, which consists of 45 trailers for offices and classrooms, 400 trailers for resident students, faculty and staff.

“Things are still hard, but it’s better,” Phillips says. “Katrina was devastating, and I cried a lot, but I hurt more for the people who were left behind — people who didn’t have the means or transportation to get out of the city. My training in counseling helped me to cope better so I could help others go through it. But at the same time, it’s hard because here I am now living in a trailer park. I once lived in a nice apartment complex. I had a two-story loft that was furnished — I had things. Now I’m still living out of my suitcases.”

She also misses many of her friends and colleagues who have since relocated all across the nation. “It’s been quite a challenge, but at the same time, I count my blessings,” Phillips says. “I was able to come back. I have a job, health insurance and the opportunity to finish the program. Even in my FEMA trailer, I’m writing my dissertation.”

Phillips expects to graduate next May and is determined to leave the city. “I don’t know where,” she says, “but I do want to leave New Orleans — somewhere I can have some stability, my own place. I’ve grown to realize that. Everything now to me is temporary. Although I knew that before the storm, now I really know things in life are just temporary and what you have in life today might not be what you have tomorrow. You have to take advantage of everything, that day, that moment.”

Phillips thinks the experience of Katrina has prepared her to be a successful counselor. By helping others cope, she also believes she has helped herself. “I’m helping them feel hope after Katrina because I’ve been through it,” she says. “I know it’s hard. I know it’s difficult, I’ve lived it too. I’ve lost things, I’ve lost friends, but it’s made me stronger. It’s made me a better counselor. My training can help me help these students even though I’m living the crisis too.”

Phillips regularly meets with other counselors so they can share their experiences and decompress. “Talking about it helps,” she says. “Just talking about this now got me teary-eyed, but I look where I am now and I’m writing my dissertation. At one time I thought school was over for me, but I’m living on campus again and I’m walking to work, so I see those as blessings.”

Lea Flowers

Lea Flowers is a wife, mother of two boys and a doctoral student. Her life is lived on the go.
Prior to Hurricane Katrina, she was “ABD” — all but dissertation — and was preparing for her interviews and study. “In the days leading up to Katrina, it was gorgeous,” she remembers. “It was the best two days of weather we had had in awhile. It was perfect weather. When they say it’s the calm before the storm, they really mean it.” Flowers and her family were attending a wedding reception when she heard that the mayor of New Orleans was urging people to board up their homes and evacuate.

“Of course we knew something was in the Gulf,” she says, “but we didn’t take it too seriously. It happens all the time in New Orleans. But we went ahead and boarded the house and packed about three days of clothes along with some pictures and left with the full assumption that we would be back.”

The Flowers family drove to Birmingham, Ala. There was a stay with relatives living in Alexandria, La. “I went to a Wal-Mart to try and buy some clothes for us,” Flowers says, “but everything was bought out. We went to Old Navy, and I ran into one of my old professors. It was like we were all in a fog and all we had were the clothes on our backs. I remember just walking around in these 99-cent flip-flops for what seems like forever because that’s all I had.”

Flowers says the experience was hard on her family, especially her oldest son. “It’s those little things that we all miss,” she says. At that point, the logical conclusion became obvious. “We were all in a fog and all we had were the clothes on our backs. I remember just walking around in these 99-cent flip-flops for what seems like forever because that’s all I had.”

The 10 feet of water had receded, but their possessions had been transformed into little more than debris. All that was left was a skeleton of a home filled with sludge and mold. Flowers and her husband finallly made it back into New Orleans to see what was left of their home in October. They left their sons, ages 7 and 9, with family because they didn’t want to subject them to more trauma. The 10 feet of water had receded, but their possessions had been transformed into little more than debris. All that was left was a skeleton of a home filled with sludge and mold. They knew they would never call New Orleans home again and returned to Birmingham soon thereafter.

Flowers eventually settled in Alabama and began to get back on track with her dissertation. She did most of her interviews online but traveled to New Orleans periodically to meet with her committee and professors. She finished her study and graduated last May.

Flowers says the experience was hard on her family, especially her oldest son. “It’s those little things that we all miss,” she says. “His birthday is in July, and last year he had just gotten a new Batmobile. So we are sitting there and trying to explain things to him and he says, ‘So does that mean my Batmobile is gone? But Mom, I stuck it under my bed to protect it from the hurricane. It’s in a special place.’ From a child’s perspective, he thought he did all he could to protect it. Then my other son says, ‘But Dad boarded up the house.’ That was a challenge to explain.” Both boys have since adjusted to a new school and made new friends, she says. “And (my oldest son) has a new Batmobile.”

What’s left of the family’s home and property is for sale, but they don’t anticipate a potential buyer to emerge anytime soon — at least not until after the current hurricane season comes to a close.

Flowers, like many others, describes New Orleans as a war zone. “The city is in major construction mode, but it’s like a drop in the ocean,” she says. “There are only bits and pieces done. So we are going to move forward with our lives. The kids have been through enough, so we don’t think it’s fair to move them again.

“Without going and seeing the city, I think it’s very difficult for people to get a sense of the dev-
Dorm duty

Counselor teaches college student ‘odd couples’ how to reconcile their differences as roommates and live in peace

BY ANGELA KENNEDY

“There’s nothing like waking up to your college roommate having sex in the bunk above you.”

That’s the first line in My Roommate Is Driving Me Crazy! Solve Conflicts, Set Boundaries and Survive the College Roommate From Hell, a book written by American Counseling Association member Susan Fee. The book’s goal is to help young adults deal with sticky living situations by providing real stories from real students — and then offering real solutions.

Fee, a licensed counselor, corporate trainer and former journalist, was inspired to write the book while working as a counselor at the Baldwin-Wallace College Health and Counseling Center in Berea, Ohio. “I had so many students coming in to see me about problems with their roommates,” she says, “yet most of them never bothered to tell their roommates.”

After interviewing hundreds of college students, residential advisers and staff nationwide, it became clear to Fee that roommate conflict was a pervasive issue. Her book includes several roommate scenarios and provides more than 250 conversation starters for difficult situations, from addressing an individual’s personal hygiene habits (or lack thereof) to more serious issues such as cutting, alcoholism and depression. Fee says the book is a tool to help high school counselors prepare students for life in a college dorm and also to help college students learn the subtle art of conflict resolution.

“We are helping to develop critical thinkers,” she says. “With high school seniors, it’s important to talk about expectations. I encourage students to think about a situation and how they would handle it.” Fee further advises counselors to encourage role playing, having the students act out the scenes. “Ask them, ‘What would you say? How would you react?’ They laugh and think it’s funny, but you can see the wheels turning,” she says. “For high school students, it really gets them to think about all sorts of things. Most of them haven’t thought about the mental health issues or stress relief or how to get along with their RAs (resident advisers). These are things they really haven’t had experience with.”

At the same time, Fee says, college counselors should speak with Resident Life staff, teaching them how to help students more effectively negotiate resolutions to their problems. “These students (the RAs) are only a year or two older than the people they are supposed to monitor,” she points out. “They, too, sometimes lack the skills to help resolve roommate issues. Setting those boundaries can be really difficult for a 19- to 20-year-old.”

Fee says the roommate tips she passes along to RAs are similar to the assertiveness and conflict resolution training she provides to corporations. “These student (monitors) are still trying to go to school too, and they are exhausted about halfway through the year,” she says. “We learn in counselor training how to take care of ourselves, but these young people haven’t received that training.” These young dorm leaders often don’t know when to say when or how to detach from the situations that other students are bringing to them.

Roommates 101

In My Roommate Is Driving Me Crazy, Fee offers “ice breakers” to help roommates communicate their concerns in a nonthreatening manner. At the end of many chapters, she also provides tips, website resources and suggested book titles that can provide additional advice. “I think young people appreciate teaching through examples and other people’s stories,” Fee says. “That’s why I put so many (real-life) stories in the book. The conversation starters teach concepts and help them discuss boundaries without sounding as if they are ‘attacking.’”

Here are Fee’s top five survival strategies to help college roommates maintain peaceful coexistence:

81 Talk
“If something is bugging you, bring it up in a nondefensive way rather than assume your roommate can read your mind,” she advises. “Nothing can change unless you acknowledge it. It’s possible your roommate might not even be aware there is a problem.”

82 Focus on behavior, not personality
Students need to understand that it’s not reasonable to ask people to change who they are, Fee says, but it is acceptable to ask them to tone down how they express themselves. Keep the conversation focused on negotiation, and beware of detouring into name-calling. Figure out what is acceptable and fair for both parties involved. “You won’t be able to transform your roommate into your new best friend,” she says, “but you can make things a lot more bearable.”

83 Stay flexible
No one is perfect. Therefore, Fee suggests that roommates be willing to look at their own behaviors. Consider what you might be able to do differently to help the situation instead of placing all the blame on the other person.

84 Start with one pet peeve
Though the list of your roommate’s annoying habits may be growing longer by the hour, begin with the one that irritates you most. Fee advises roommates to begin with one pet peeve, having the conversation focused on negotiation, and beware of detouring into name-calling. Figure out what is acceptable and fair for both parties involved. “You won’t be able to transform your roommate into your new best friend,” she says, “but you can make things a lot more bearable.”

Continued on page 51
Knowledge is a degree that incorporates life’s curriculum.
All in the family

When parents play a role in a student’s struggles, school counselors often find themselves walking a fine line

BY JIM PATERSON

We are often reminded today that we develop many patterns in our lives because of (or in spite of) our parents. Everyone from Oprah and Dr. Phil to serious researchers who study our emotional makeup reinforce notions about the key role that parents play — perhaps even before birth.

That connection often creates a dilemma for school counselors. It is sometimes clear that students’ behavior and performance are inseparably linked to issues facing their parents, but at the same time counseling parents may be inappropriate or untenable. “We need to be involved with parents. It is a priority now more than ever,” says Marcia Dull, a school counselor at Logan High School in La Crosse, Wis., and the Midwestern Regional vice president for the American School Counselor Association, a division of the American Counseling Association.

“How” and “When” certainly are questions faced by school counselors, who must determine how they can justify working with parents on even the most limited basis during already jam-packed days when they struggle to find the time to address all student concerns. But school counselors are finding ways to help parents, while in turn ensuring that students are in a position to make the most of their educational experiences, which is a theme now being promoted in school counseling circles and often by school administrators.

“It is my role to work with the student to help them be successful. My job is not necessarily to worry about the mental health of the parent,” says Barbara Brady Blackburn, ASCA’s 2005-2006 president. “But if a parent has a substance abuse issue or a mental health issue that is affecting the student, I think there are ways I can be involved.”

Blackburn suggests meeting with parents and using language that focuses on the concerns of their child. “I want them to be aware that Tommy is concerned about them,” she says. She then provides the parents with good strategies to use to promote student success, focusing particularly on being aware of the student’s performance and behavior in school. Where appropriate, she would urge the parent or parents to get counseling or other services outside of school, offering referrals as needed. “Of course,” Blackburn points out, “if there is any abuse or if the parent is talking about hurting themselves, I am required by law to report that to the proper authorities.”

Deb Hardy, past president of the New York State School Counselors Association and head of counseling at Irvington High School in Irvington, N.Y., says there are times when a counselor must be more deeply involved. “I recall a moment when a child was so distraught about a parent’s behavior that, as a counselor, I had to intervene, bring in the parent and talk about the effects of their personal situation on their child,” she says. “I then referred them to a therapist in the community that had established great collaborative programs with the school.”

Hardy notes that parents of students who speak English as a second language often resist visiting therapists because in their culture, it suggests weakness or severe mental health issues. She often counsels these parents on their children’s behavioral issues, acceptable punishments, transition concerns and other topics.

Gina Meriwether, a counselor at Darlington School near El Reno in central Oklahoma, finds that she has little choice but to be involved in the lives of her students’ parents. Darlington serves approximately 210 children from pre-K through eighth grade, 90 percent of whom are American Indian. “A high percentage of the school’s parents deal with problems related to alcohol, according to statistics from the Cheyenne Arapaho tribe, and the average annual household income is extremely low.”

“We have to do a lot for the parents. In fact, we become surrogate parents,” Meriwether says. Other services are not always readily available for these parents, Meriwether says, so she often gets involved by providing assistance to the families where needed, including food, potential employment, social services and connecting them with treatment for drug or alcohol problems. She also tries to use preventative measures, such as holding groups and workshops, which is an approach that Blackburn strongly supports.

“But I have a lot of walk-ins,” Meriwether says. “I usually work with them using brief counseling, listen to their concerns and then make an appropriate referral.”
She notes that parents often want to talk about how to handle their child — an adolescent suddenly thinking and acting very independently, an anxious new first-grader or a child moving up to middle school. In most cases, experts say that is appropriate territory for school counselors.

“I talk to them about having realistic expectations, about setting limits and the importance of knowing friends,” Meriwether says. “I try to help them learn how to talk to their children. There are parents here who a child never can trust, and that is really hard.”

In addition, Meriwether has tried to involve parents more often in the school, requiring that they participate in certain social events and school projects. And she attempts to fashion workshops so that they will benefit both the child and the adult. Some of the topics she has covered have included exercise and nutrition, reading readiness and computers and cyberspace security. Blackburn also holds parenting workshops.

Dull says the key is often just making it known that she is available to the parents. She makes herself visible and accessible at school-parent functions, puts her name in front of parents in newsletters and school mailings and tries to circulate throughout the school and community. She also offers limited solution-focused counseling to parents. Dull believes that by arriving at some problem-solving goals and some “short-term solutions to a long-term problem,” parents can often begin to get their lives together and improve the lives of their children, thus heightening their readiness for school.

“I might say, ‘Bobby here is not doing what he can. There is something missing. Let’s figure out what it is. Let’s start laying out a plan,’” Dull says. “I always say something like ‘I’m not in your shoes, but here are some thoughts.’ We might bump heads. We might have a different view of things, especially about how they are relating to their child, but I find they want to talk and they listen.”

Dull finds that parents don’t generally have time for workshops, classes and groups, but she admits she’s not averse to employing “backdoor techniques,” such as raising an issue with parents through the cross country team that she coaches or at a community function. “Some of my colleagues want to be paperwork pushers, but we can’t,” she says. “They believe in contract hours and a limit to what you spend time on. You can’t limit yourself because we just have this abundance of responsibilities, and there are so many issues raised in these nontraditional families. Sometimes parents are part of it.”

ASCA, in a document describing the role of the school counselor, advocates working in a variety of ways to maximize student achievement, including collaboration with other “stakeholders.” The association’s newly developed National Model also encourages “providing services to students, parents and school staff and the community” with, among other things, “responsive services,” including consultations with parents.
Looking for indirect means to positively affect the mental health of school staff

BY JIM PATERSON

When a school staff member is struggling with a personal problem, it could affect a significant number of the school counselor’s clients — namely, students. That may seem like justification enough for the counselor to reach out to the staff member, but the issue isn’t that clear-cut.

“I’ve always had the view that our clients are kids, and counseling the staff strays into a murky area,” says Kate Wilson, director of guidance and counseling at U-32, a public school for grades 7-12 in Montpelier, Vt. She was previously head of counseling for a high school in an affluent suburb of Washington, D.C., where pressures on staff were often extremely high.

Despite her comment, Wilson doesn’t believe a counselor can’t be involved in the emotional well-being of an individual staff member or the school community as a whole. She says a school counselor may listen to the individual and then try to find appropriate services, perhaps through an employee assistance program. She also believes counselors can work to improve the school climate for all staff. “I think it is an integral part of our role to deal with the mental health of the school,” she says.

Those views are echoed by other counselors and experts in the field: Direct counseling may be inappropriate, but the school counselor’s role nonetheless includes tending to the mental health of the staff.

“In my opinion, school counselors should never offer counseling services to school faculty, administrators or staff members,” says Ted Remley, professor of counseling at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., and author of the book Ethical, Legal and Professional Issues in Counseling. He suggests that school counselors follow Wilson’s approach when helping a staff member: Listen carefully to the staff member’s concern, keep what is said confidential and refer the individual to an appropriate service outside the school. Wilson does note, however, that effective outside services are sometimes lacking, so school counselors may have to advocate for better ones.

Barbara Brady Blackburn, president of the American School Counselor Association in 2005-2006, says certain circumstances may warrant a school counselor initiating a session with a staff member. “It is my role to advance student achievement, so if we have a staff member who has issues and can’t perform in the classroom and is impeding student achievement, my job is to meet with them and be an ear and then refer them to an appropriate resource,” she says. “In some cases I may have to bring it to the attention of an administrator. For instance, substance abuse. It is my obligation to report it to an administrator. If it is from an outside source, I’m not bound by confidentiality.”

In the case of a crisis or tragic event, Blackburn says, a school counselor may also get involved with staff more directly, either to help them work with the school’s students or to deal with the issue themselves.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were a prime example of that circumstance, Wilson says. “We offered a lot of support and information to the staff on how to deal with the issues in their classes,” she says. “We helped them know how to talk to the kids about what was going on. We offered them suggestions on how to deal with the onslaught of information and news and images. And we gave them information to help keep themselves mentally well.”

Wilson says that when an issue needs to be addressed in the school, counselors often take on that responsibility. Eileen Vickers, past president of the Wyoming School Counseling Association and a school counselor at Newcastle Middle School in Newcastle, Wyo., agrees. It might be information about classroom management, teaching effectiveness or staff cooperation, she says, or it might be an individual staff member simply seeking advice on how to improve performance. “The (ASCA) National Model promotes effective use of school counselor skills to help all students,” Vickers says. “While it does not place counselors in that role of staff counselor, it does also say that in helping students, there must be system support, and we must provide responsive services when it becomes necessary.”

“In my 20 years of experience as a school counselor, I probably have seen staff most often individually for their debriefing and venting in a nonjudgmental, confidential arena,” she says. “This might be about dealing with students, other staff, administrators or family. And support during times of grief seems to be a natural utilization of the counseling office.”

Blackburn recommends that school counselors also explore other avenues of presenting helpful information to staff. For example, she says, they might provide tips in a staff newsletter or bring in speakers to discuss topics such as reducing stress, defusing anger or acquiring new coping skills.

Wilson believes the counseling office can improve the school climate in less formal ways. She and her counseling colleagues promote a breakfast celebration of Sigmund Freud’s
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Finding appropriate jobs on the Internet

Last month, this column examined the use of web resources in searching for a job, concluding that, while the Internet can be an excellent research tool, it is not a resource that should be relied upon to the exclusion of all others. In part two of this series, we will examine strategies to identify counseling jobs.

Many online sites promise lots of job listings and deliver the numbers to support their claims. The problem is finding appropriate job listings. A keyword search usually yields the best matches, but it is important to use the right keywords.

As an experiment for this article, I used the keyword “counselor” to search two of the best-known online job boards. The first search returned 160 pages of hits. Unfortunately, most of the positions listed on the first page were “sales counselors” for a national weight loss chain. The second board yielded similar results, with many sales representative positions masquerading as “counselors” of one sort or another.

Using the keyword “counselor” also produced voluminous results, but this time the top entries seemed to be more appropriate to the profession (at least on the first site). Still, plenty of unrelated positions surfaced.

I used “mental health,” “mental health counselor,” “therapist” and “LPC” as keywords in subsequent searches. Predictably, “therapist” pulled occupational and physical therapist positions to the top of the list on both sites but still yielded large numbers of positions. “Mental health counselor” (without quotation marks) produced mostly relevant listings (eight pages and 26 positions, respectively) but also eliminated a number of appropriate positions.

Overall, “LPC” pulled the greatest number of relevant listings (27 pages and 118 jobs, respectively). Still, searching with this term has its own inherent problems. On closer examination, LPC was a proprietary acronym for one organization that was completely unrelated to the counseling profession.

The bigger issue, though, is that “LPC” is not the preferred term for licensed counselors in all states. This is a particularly cogent point for candidates who are conducting a national search. One implication is that national organizations targeting candidates in a specific territory may advertise for the “wrong” license, and when they do, candidates who are searching for the “right” license may not find the position.

A related point is that the word “counselor” may not be specified in certain job titles, even if the positions are appropriate for the profession. While searching the term “LPC” online, members of ACA’s Professional Affairs team have noticed that many of the positions listed have job titles that don’t include the word “counselor.”

So given this information, what strategies should you employ?

Search with a number of different keywords or keyword combinations. You may need to experiment to find the right combination of words or phrases that most accurately target the positions that fit you best.

Look at more than one Big Board site. Given limited advertising budgets, it’s unlikely that every job will be posted on every board. And don’t limit yourself to the Big boards. Plenty of smaller sites have job postings that may be more relevant. For example, the American Counseling Association posts counseling positions online that are advertised in Counseling Today, and there are always some advertisers who choose online-only postings.

Don’t unwittingly eliminate great opportunities. If you are too narrow in your focus, you may miss the “perfect” position.

Read job descriptions. What are some common requirements? Is there anything new that you are seeing consistently? If you have special skills that qualify you for this, make sure these skills are specified on your résumé.

Ignore the job title … if the job description is appropriate for your search. Just because a job is titled “Social Worker” doesn’t mean a counselor isn’t qualified or shouldn’t apply. Advocate for the profession by applying and educating the human resources professionals who put the advertisements together about the training and qualifications of professional counselors.

Look for trends. Who is hiring? What positions have they advertised? What special skills are they seeking? Note names, addresses and phone numbers of hiring authorities in organizations that are advertising positions, even if they aren’t currently seeking individuals with your qualifications. These are excellent contacts for informational interviews and networking meetings.

Next month, we’ll take a look at online résumés and applications. In the meantime, if you have a question, my e-mail box is always open!

Amy Reece Connelly is ACA’s manager of Career Services. Contact her via e-mail at aacareers@counseling.org.

Telephone consultation is available to ACA members on request.

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End of page 23
Robert Urofsky

Charting a growth spurt

According to the U.S. Charter Schools website at www.uscharterschools.org, the first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992. As of the 2004-2005 school year, more than 3,000 charter schools were serving more than 700,000 students nationwide. In 2004, 40 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had passed charter school laws, and charter schools were operating in 39 states.

As Urofsky explains, charter schools are just one of the alternatives that have emerged since public school reform started gaining traction in the 1980s. Others include private voucher programs, site-based management, magnet schools and home schooling. Some reformers view the U.S. public education system as a monopoly, Urofsky says, because it has complete say over where students attend school, how resources are dispersed, how the curriculum is taught and so on. Reformers also contend that, in general, public education is failing students and that there is little accountability. “One idea that many reformers share is that all the rules and regulations, all the bureaucracy that has grown up around public schools has stifled innovation and creativity,” Urofsky says.

Charting a growth spurt

The charter schools’ movement gained momentum in the mid-1990s, with state laws that allowed school districts to open alternative schools. Since then, the number of schools and students has increased dramatically. In 2004, 3,000 charter schools were operating in 39 states. By 2005, more than 400,000 students were enrolled in charter schools.

One of the key features of charter schools is their autonomy. Unlike traditional public schools, which are governed by state and local boards of education, charter schools are independently governed by a board of directors. This allows charter schools to make decisions about curriculum, staffing, and other aspects of their operation without the constraints of state and local regulations.

Another feature of charter schools is their focus on student achievement. Many charter schools have higher academic standards and more rigorous curricula than traditional public schools. They also tend to have smaller class sizes and more individualized instruction.

As charter schools have grown, so have the number of students served. In 2004, more than 3,000 charter schools were operating in 39 states. By 2005, more than 400,000 students were enrolled in charter schools.

The future of charter schools is uncertain. While they have gained popularity and support from some stakeholders, they have also faced criticism and opposition from others. Some argue that charter schools are a way for the wealthy to avoid the public school system, while others contend that they are a way to improve student achievement.

In the end, the success of charter schools will depend on a variety of factors, including their ability to meet the needs of all students, their financial sustainability, and their ability to attract and retain high-quality teachers.

For more information on charter schools, visit www.uscharterschools.org.
principals who have seen what counselors can do and how powerful it can be for the student body.”

South Buffalo Charter has approximately 570 students in grades K-8, with plans to top off at 700. It began with a five-year charter, which has since been renewed. The school emphasizes technology and rigorous academics and buses children in from throughout Buffalo and as far away as 10 miles outside the city limits.

Graham is now the senior member of the school’s three-person counseling team. Even though he tends to work with the older children, Graham says the counselors don’t divide their caseloads according to grade level, preferring instead to “go on the need of the situation.”

One of the counselors also serves as a study skills teacher.

The school’s counselors often team up to run groups, Graham says, and also partner with different agencies and community groups to further enhance counseling and developmental activities. In addition, the counseling program uses an animal therapy program in which struggling readers strengthen their skills by reading to a dog because it makes them feel less self-conscious.

The goal of the Connections Program, another initiative launched by the counselors, is to connect the surrounding community with the schoolchildren and vice versa. The counselors bring in people from outside the school to talk with the students. For instance, a judge might discuss why school is important, or members of a “teen reality theater” might dramatize tough situations that students face. The Connections Program also sponsors a career day and takes students on an annual trip to Canisius College so they can see what college is like.

One of the challenges of working in a charter school is that it’s a relatively new environment without many of the standard regulations, Graham says, which means counselors should be prepared to let people know who they are and what their role should be in the school. On the other hand, he says, charter schools seem to allow counselors more freedom to define that role and the role of the counseling program without interference from non-counselors.

Another advantage, at least in Graham’s experience, is the expediency of setting up programs. “We don’t have to jump through too many hoops,” he says. “We’re allowed to be creative and try new things. It’s always a work in progress, and that’s very exciting.” Last year, for instance, the counselors coordinated workshops for parents, one of which discussed discipline and another that covered safe Internet surfing for children.

Graham believes one of the things the charter school’s administration and teachers value most about the counselors is their role as liaisons between the school and the parents. “We (the school counselors) can have a different relationship with the families,” he says. “We can help them understand that we’re on their side and want to work as a team.” The counselors at South Buffalo Charter even make home visits if they have trouble contacting a parent or if it’s difficult for that parent to come to the school.

Graham says the counselors also help teachers at the school bridge some of the things they are doing in the classroom by offering programs on bullying, resiliency, self-esteem, refusal skills, conflict resolution and so on. The charter school also highlights one of its “core values,” such as honesty or respect, each month. The counselors reinforce those core values by doing a lesson on them in the classrooms and the school auditorium. If individual children are having problems with those concepts, Graham says, the counselors pull them out and conduct small groups on those values.

Like London, Graham hasn’t found tight budgets or a lack of resources to be of concern at his charter school. When it comes to funding, the counseling program is allowed to search for its own grants with the assistance of a grant writer who is on staff at the school. South Buffalo Charter also covered the expense of Graham attending the ACA Convention and paid for him to get outside supervision.

Graham acknowledges that some charter schools have had trouble managing their finances (charter schools can have their charters revoked not just for a lack of academic achievement but for poor financial management). However, he says, South Buffalo Charter, which was started by a group of private citizens, has been blessed with a Board of Directors that understands how to run the business side of things.

“My experience in a charter school has been very positive,” Graham says. “It’s been a learning experience in seeing how a school develops, from the curriculum to the needs of the building. It’s allowed me to see something grow from the beginning and have a lot of success.”

Graham says counselors who have additional questions can contact him at lgraham@southbuffaloschools.org or 716.826.7213.

Jonathan Rollins is the editor-in-chief of Counseling Today. Contact him at jrollins@counseling.org.

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org

— Jonathan Rollins

Charter schools offer a “non-traditional” approach to public education. Likewise, Chris Helgestad says school counselors might want to consider taking a nontraditional approach to working with charter schools.

Helgestad, a member of the American Counseling Association and the American School Counselor Association, is the school counseling program director at the Adler Graduate School in Minneapolis. The Minneapolis-St. Paul area is something of a hotbed for charter schools, he says, and with his background in special education and alternative education, it was only natural for him to question how (or if) school counselors fit into the charter school equation.

What he found was that many charter schools in his area had small student populations and little money, meaning that few employed counselors. So he developed an idea. “I thought these schools might like to have a consultant help them put comprehensive counseling programs in place and also to help them in crisis situations,” Helgestad says. “The counselor/consultant can even be divided up between several schools.” His approach is consistent with ASCA’s National Model, he says, which calls for school counselors to assume the role of advocates and change agents, not just sit in an office and deal with one student at a time.

Helgestad recently presented at a workshop of the EdVisions Charter School Cooperative in Minnesota. EdVisions is a leader in charter school development and leadership nationwide. “The topic of the presentation was how to use the lessons learned from the American School Counselor Association’s National Model of comprehensive guidance programs to assist charter schools in their advisement of students, since many charter schools do not employ school counselors but use teachers as advisers,” he says. “It was partially designed to promote the role of the school counselor, not as a primary provider but as a consultant to these small learning communities. I think school counselors could be great assets to these small schools that will likely never be able to afford full-time counselor services with such small student populations. However, part-time counselor consulting contracts might be just the ticket for these schools.”

Helgestad walked the participants through some of the lessons counselors have learned in developing guidance programs. “Historically, school counselors have spent much of their time responding to the needs of a small percentage of students, typically high-achieving or high-risk,” he said in his presentation. “But school counseling programs are designed to ensure that every student receives the program benefits.”

School counseling programs should be comprehensive in scope, he says, including components that help students in the areas of academics, career planning and personal/social skills. The program should be preventive in design — teaching specific skills to all students through a coordinated prevention education program — and developmental in nature, meeting the needs of students at various growth stages.

In addition, he says an effective school counseling program should feature:

- Curriculum: Classroom instruction, interdisciplinary curriculum, group activities, and parent workshops and instruction
- Individual student planning: Helping students plan, monitor and manage their own learning through appraisal and advisement
- Responsive services: Consultation; individual and small group counseling; crisis counseling/response; referrals or consultations with parents, teachers and other specialists; and peer helpers

While Helgestad is waiting to see how his idea is received, he believes the approach could be a win-win situation for both charter schools and school counselors. “I definitely think this fills a niche,” he says.

- Jonathan Rollins

An alternate route

Counseling Today September 2006

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org
increased. “Play and imitation play — all time dedicated to recess should be from schools. If anything, he thinks the opposed to the idea of eliminating recess ture, challenge and personal satisfaction.”

Kent, a member of ACA, is strongly opposed to the idea of eliminating recess from schools. If anything, he thinks the time dedicated to recess should be increased. “Play and imitation play — all the things kids do on the playground, especially elementary-school-age children — facilitate cognitive development,” he says. “It not only facilitates cognitive judgment but also the develop-ment of language. So play is critical to cognitive, social and psychosocial devel-opment.” He adds that school counselors need to advocate for unstructured play-time and should be prepared to present research in support of the effort. Sink suggests counselors who know that their schools may be considering the elimina-tion of recess hold an in-service for faculty, staff and administration on the impor-tance of play, not just recess.

One of the other problems is that when you give kids choices, they may end up setting in a computer lab instead of interacting with one another, Sink says. “The key is to have kids play — actual play — whether it be organized sports or hopscotch or having toys out for them to play with. That's how they learn rule with. That's how they learn rule

Additionally, there are other benefits to recess, McCartney says. For instance, many teachers use recess to encourage students to pay attention down the home-stretch. “There are very few incentives for us to use in school,” she points out, “and a lot of times (recess) does a really good job of motivating kids to finish their work or to stay focused for a few minutes longer to grasp a concept. Then they can have some release time.” During the final push before state testing last spring, McCartney says she also used recess to keep her students on track. “I've used it as successfully with a chart with a point system where students would earn points for being on time, having their home-work finished or having good behavior in the cafeteria,” she explains. “And when they earned so many points, I would take them out for an extra recess. The kids really appreciated it that extra time, and the teachers appreciated the help, too.”

McCartney also sees recess as an opportunity for children to build self-esteem and confidence. “There are some kids who may not be real successful in math or social studies, but they get out-side and they can hit a ball or shoot a bas-ket and it gives them an opportunity to shine where maybe they weren’t shining in the building,” she says. “That helps them feel better about themselves — something that they can do well — and it helps when the other kids in the class see this student do something well.”

School counselors can also use recess as a diagnostic tool by watching what is happening on the playground. They can observe which students are playing together and if an individual student is isolated or bullied. McCartney utilizes this tactic to get a feel for her students’ social development.

“Seeing students interact really gives you a different picture from any other time,” she says. “The classroom is struc-tured and the lunchroom is structured and even the hall, but when they are out on their own and it’s free play outside, that really is an opportunity for everybody to find a place socially — or not. As a school counselor, I can get a pulse for what’s going on with the kids, and I know if I need to check in on a particular student.”

Both McCartney and Sink agree that school counselors should be on the fore-front of this debate, promoting the impor-tance of unstructured playtime. The Rescuing Recess website lists talking points that school counselors and other student advocates can use to support recess poli-cies. Here are a few:

**Emotional/Cognitive**
- Research shows that attention re-quires periodic novelty: The brain needs downtime to recycle chemi-cals that are crucial for long-term memory formation.
- Children learn more effectively when their efforts are distributed over time rather than concentrated in longer periods.

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Play is an active form of learning that unites the mind, body and spirit. Until at least the age of 9, children’s learning occurs best when the whole self is involved. The senses of smell, touch and taste and the sense of motion through space are powerful modes of learning.

A study found that fourth-graders were more on-task and less fidgety in the classroom on days when they had recess, with hyperactive children among those benefiting most. Psychologists have found that children, especially boys, are more restless and show less concentration when their normal recess period is delayed.

Social

- Children permitted to play freely with peers develop skills for seeing things through another person’s point of view - cooperating, helping, sharing and solving problems.
- The playful aspects of recess activities, which include choice, spontaneity, social interaction, creative use of time and problem solving, provide children with a rich context that fosters development in multiple aspects. Play gives children a chance to learn, consolidate and practice skills necessary for further growth and learning.
- Much of what children do during recess, including making choices, developing rules for play and learning to resolve conflicts to keep the game going, involves the development of social skills.

Physical

- Can physical education class be substituted for recess? The National Association for Sport and Physical Education says “No.” P.E. provides a “sequential instructional program” related to physical activity and performance, while recess provides unstructured playtime where children “have choices, develop rules for play...and practice or use skills developed in physical education.”
- Studies reported that children who lead sedentary lifestyles suffer increased health risks.
- Physical activity improves general circulation, increases blood flow to the brain and raises levels of norepinephrine and endorphins - all of which may reduce stress, improve mood, induce a calming effect after exercise and perhaps, as a result, improve achievement.

The Rescuing Recess website offers a three-prong approach — “Kids Get Involved,” “Parents and Teachers Get Informed” and “Everybody Gets Animated” — that provides action-oriented information as well as tool kits and volunteer information.

“The campaign to rescue recess by having parents, teachers and students involved is a good way to ensure that everyone understands the benefits of an activity that affects the well-being of children physically, mentally, emotionally and socially,” Wakefield says.

School counselors might want to check out the Rescuing Recess website and give kids a break.

Angela Kennedy is a senior writer for Counseling Today. Contact her at a kennedy@counseling.org.

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org

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The power of the mind is limitless at Argosy University.
Continued from page 15

Doctoral student and New Orleans native, Bianca Puglia’s home was destroyed by the rising flood waters from Hurricane Katrina last year. Despite her devastating loss, she and her family refuse to leave the city they have loved for generations.

Counseling graduate student Lea Flowers took the above (and below, right) of the devastation in the New Orleans 9th Ward a month after the storm. “They are just a small sample of the surreal atmosphere,” she says.

Even now it’s grassroots and individuals pulling up their bootstraps to get things done, but they can’t do it all by themselves. My husband and I realized that this is bigger than us — we can’t do it. It’s going to be years before the Times-Picayune (the daily newspaper in New Orleans) no longer has Katrina-related news on the front page. It’s going to take quite sometime before the city is anywhere near normal.”

A year later, Flowers, like many of the other UNO students, is still working to reclaim her life. “It’s a horrific thing that has been shared by many people, but there is also a part of us wanting to be who we were before,” she says. “I want to be Lea Flowers again, not a refugee or evacuee.”

Flowers adds that she values this time as part of her life experience, but she doesn’t want it to define who she is. “It’s time to see people as humans instead of victims. A loss is a loss, and everyone can relate to that,” she says, emphasizing that losing a home isn’t so different from losing a relationship. “If you look at it in that sense, then we’ve all had a Katrina moment sometime in our life. It becomes more about empathy than pity.”

Bianca Puglia

“I was a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans. I was a very busy graduate assistant. Then Katrina came along and everything changed;” says Bianca Puglia, a native of New Orleans whose family has lived in and around the Crescent City for generations.

Unlike many of the other “locals” who preferred to batten down the hatches, Puglia says she and her family always heeded the storm warnings. “My family always evacuates with anything over a Category II hurricane,” she says. “My family lost everything with Hurricane Betsy in 1965 when I was a child.” But as Katrina approached, even Puglia was tempted to stay and wait out the storm. She was so focused on school that she didn’t want to leave. “My whole life was the doc program and getting my Ph.D. in counseling education,” she says, emphasizing that losing a storm will probably take me years before I can return to New Orleans for almost a month. Her parents and one of her other siblings weren’t so fortunate. She, her other sister and her brother each lost their homes.

But her family wouldn’t hear of her staying behind, so Puglia packed up her computer files and a few old clothes. “I was thinking I would be held up in a hotel for about three days and come home,” she says, citing her usual evacuation plan. Instead, she ended up staying in Houston with a friend of the family and wasn’t able to return to New Orleans for almost a month. Her parents and one of her sisters have homes on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and didn’t sustain significant damage. But Puglia and her other siblings weren’t so fortunate. She, her other sister and her brother each lost their homes.

“I lived with my parents until the end of November, and everything was just surreal,” says Puglia. “We lost over 100 homes in our extended family. There was a steady stream of people bringing what they could salvage from their homes to my parents’ house. It was hard trying to figure out where everyone was. We were lucky that we didn’t lose any people.”

Puglia was able to take some classes online while living with her parents. “That was very important to me,” she says, her voice cracking as emotions resurface, “because it was the only part of my life that I could hang onto. School was all I had left except for an old pair of jeans and two T-shirts.”

She wanted very badly to return to the city and scramble to find affordable housing. “I got lucky and found one in Marigny, the neighborhood I was thinking about moving to before Katrina,” she says. Once she had her own space again, Puglia’s spirits began to pick up. “I was glad to be back in the city and where the city has yet to be rebuilt, but Puglia is adjusting to the new New Orleans. That process has been helped along, she says, because she and the other graduate students who were able to come back to the UNO counseling program have grown close and depend on one another for strength and encouragement.

Puglia is looking forward to graduating in August or December of 2007. “I want to graduate and find a professorship, but I have mixed feelings about leaving the city now,” she says. “I was ready to leave it before, but there is a part of me that feels that I need to stay. I need to help contribute to the rebuilding, but the professorship will probably take me away from New Orleans.”

Angela Kennedy is a senior writer for Counseling Today. E-mail comments about this article to akenney@counseling.org.

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org
Risk management assistance available to ACA members

By Paul Nelson

Nearly every day, counselors face issues that could result in a licensing board complaint or a lawsuit. Typically, it’s because clients become distressed when something doesn’t meet their expectations: divorce versus reconciliation, child custody versus loss of custody, attempted act of violence/actual act of violence, transference, potential abandonment, anger over a counselor’s duty to report abuse. Some states have stronger rules than others, so when such a case arises, the ACA Insurance Trust has retained an attorney who will research the law and give direction to the caller. The service is free of charge (beyond the stated cost of the annual premium for insurance) to ACA members who participate in the sponsored professional liability insurance program.

Listed in the chart below are summaries for a recent reporting period.

This chart indicates the benefits that apply to counseling professionals who are ACA members and participate in the sponsored insurance program. The ACA Insurance Trust also offers an additional benefit — a CD on how to avoid legal difficulties. The free CD is available by calling the ACA Insurance Trust office at 800.347.6647, ext. 284. Requests can also be sent via e-mail to pnelson.acait@counseling.org.

Paul Nelson is the executive director of the ACA Insurance Trust. Contact him at pnelson.acait@counseling.org.

### Summary of Issues for Eight-Month Period 11/1/05-6/30/06 • ACA Insurance Trust Risk Management Service

<table>
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<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>CAUSE</th>
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<td>Dual Relationships/Conflicts of Interest/Boundary Issues</td>
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<td>Fee Disputes (including refunds, potential malpractice counter-claims to collection, fee-splitting, etc.)</td>
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<td>Criminal/Assault Issues</td>
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<td>Summary of Issues for Eight-Month Period 11/1/05-6/30/06 • ACA Insurance Trust Risk Management Service</td>
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<td>Failure to Treat/Miscellaneous Potential Malpractice Issues</td>
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Foundations of Disaster Mental Health Training

Thursday, March 22 – 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

ACA will be offering the American Red Cross Foundations of Disaster Mental Health training at the 2007 ACA Convention because we realize that in a disaster environment, mental health services take on a degree of urgency in addition to the level of importance that professional mental health providers deal with on a daily basis. Qualifications to take this training include:

- A current ACA Member.
- Counselors must be licensed for independent practice by a State Counseling Licensure Board.
- Please note that in a two-tier state, counselors need to be licensed at the higher, independent practice level.
- Counselors must have a valid practicing license at the time of training.
- It is highly recommended that counselors take the American Red Cross Introduction to Disaster Services course online at Redcross.org.
- Counselors must pre-register to attend the ACA Convention Training by Wednesday, January 31, 2007.

To register, please contact Holly Clubb at hclubb@counseling.org or 800-347-6647, ext 229. There are 6.5 CEs offered for completing this training.
The question is not “Can conversion therapies be harmful?” Of course they can. Poorly conducted and psychotherapy is harmful. One of the main purposes of organizations such as ACA is to protect consumers from bad counselors. There certainly is no research that has concluded that the act of helping a person explore their sexual orientation is more often harmed than by other psychotherapy clients. The authors’ duplicity is exposed in that they do not hold gay-affirmative therapists to the same standard. Agenda-driven gay-affirmative therapists have the same potential for harming clients as any other agenda-driven therapist.

The question is not “Have conversion therapies been proved to work?” Most types of psychotherapy have not been “proved” to work. All psychotherapy and counseling clients should be warned by therapists that they cannot be guaranteed whether the clients’ goals is to lose weight or to improve their assertiveness in their marital relationship. Proof of the efficacy of many kinds of therapy, including eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, psychoanalysis and gestalt therapy, is very hard to come by, yet counselors continue to practice them, apparently because some clients find value in the therapies.

The question is not “Is homosexuality a pathology?” People seek counseling for many reasons that are not technically confessed. Many people wishing to explore their sexual identities seek counseling at its heart provides support to individuals’ attempts to expose themselves with their autonomy and goals and integrate all of these into a more satisfying life.

We know this is possible because I (Steven Donaldson) am one of the most comprehensive and methodologically sound studies of human sexuality to date (Laumann et al., 1994), the researchers were skeptical that they could determine the prevalence of homosexuality because of the instability of homosexuality and the difficulties in defining the term. Over time, many people who once experienced some aspect of homophobia developed a heterosexual identity, making it difficult to arrive at an adequate definition of the noun “homosexual.”

Robert Spitzer, the Columbia psychiatrist who was instrumental in the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, did a landmark study concluding that some homosexual people do indeed change not only behavior but also fantasy and desire, and these changes appear to be very stable over time. The scientific conclusion is that human sexuality for some undefined number of people is fluid. People have reported change by going to therapy, by going to parapsychology groups, by going to religious groups and by doing nothing at all. We cannot think of a more appropriate use of professional counseling than to help people explore their sexual desires and the deeper meanings they derive from these desires.

We find this article and ones like it to be divisive and counterproductive. We think it is sad that the current attitude in ACA and the greater therapeutic community is such that clients are required to determine their treatment goals before they reach their first appointment. Under present conditions, clients likely feel pushed to choose: Am I going to a “conversion therapist” or a “gay-affirmative therapist”?

We don’t believe these camps have to be in conflict. It seems to us that a good therapist — one who honors clients’ autonomy and respects their wishes — should both help clients pursue their own goals in therapy and who does not impose his/her own values on clients — would be able to help clients explore their deepest longings, values and goals and integrate all of these into a more satisfying life.

We are convinced that sexuality is a social construct, and that the way society defines and experiences sexuality is shaped by the cultural context. The social construction of sexuality is a powerful force that influences our perceptions of what constitutes normal and acceptable behavior. Conversion therapy is one example of this phenomenon, where individuals are encouraged to change their sexual orientation through psychological or spiritual means.

Conversion therapy is a practice in which individuals are taught to repress or change their sexual orientation, often through aversion therapy, psychotherapy, or religious interventions. Conversion therapy is considered harmful and unethical by many professional organizations, including the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Psychological Association (APA).

The goal of conversion therapy is to change an individual’s sexual orientation from gay or lesbian to heterosexual. This is often done through a variety of methods, including prayer, counseling, and behavioral therapy. However, numerous studies have shown that conversion therapy is not effective in changing sexual orientation and can lead to negative psychological outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, and self-hatred.

The American Psychological Association (APA) has issued a statement condemning conversion therapy as harmful and unethical. The APA recommends that counselors and therapists avoid engaging in conversion therapy and instead focus on providing support and affirmation to individuals who are exploring their sexual identity.

In conclusion, we believe that sexuality should be recognized as a normal and healthy part of human diversity. Conversion therapy is a harmful and ineffective practice that should not be promoted or condoned. Instead, we should work towards creating a more accepting and inclusive society that values and respects all sexual orientations.
“Social justice,” then, is not for everyone, but it’s certainly showing up everywhere.

If you’re not aware of this, begin by looking more closely at the ACA Multicultural, Cross-Cultural and Advocacy Standards (yes, there are now “advocacy” standards). Look at standards for social workers and psychologists. These standards have begun to go too far, especially when you hear them voiced by someone like D’Andrea, who readily fills in the political context behind them.

“Social justice,” based as it tends to be on leftist ideals, is anti-democratic and anti-capitalist. Re-enter D’Andrea: “Professional associations such as ACA need to make room for individuals who are often viewed as ‘radicals’ or ‘troublemakers’ because of the assertive ways in which they initiate discussions about controversial issues and advocate for immediate and substantial organizational changes to address these issues” (March, my emphases). Sound democratic? Sound ironic? I think ACA needs already made substantial “room” for “radicals.”

At the end of Multicultural Counseling Competencies and Standards: A Call to the Profession, available on the ACA website, we read that “multiculturalism is inclusive of all persons and groups.” If this statement, published in the 1992 article, ever was true, it certainly isn’t now, not in light of what multiculturalism currently seems to mean. Are there oppressed groups? Yes. Should we have a just society? Of course. I challenge Counseling Today to sponsor a rebuttal series to D’Andrea and Daniels’ political tract on “institutional racism,” and beyond that, to include a call for alternative views about the proliferation of “social justice” pronouncements that are clearly based on liberal politics.

I suspect and hope that there are plenty of alternative views. Rob Hunsaker Salt Lake City, Utah rchunsaker@msn.com

Correction
An incorrect location was provided for Emmaus House in the August 2006 article “Harnessing emotional intelligence: The correct location is Ocean Grove, N.J.

I strongly disagree with ACA member Jason H. King’s recommendation that the unified occupational title for counselors should be clinical mental health counselor ("Reader Viewpoint," July 2006). As the first vice chair of the Oregon Board of Counselors and Therapists, I fought hard to ensure that rehabilitation and career counselors would be included under the statutory and administrative regulations for Oregon’s Licensed Professional Counselor Title Act.

Our main concern was to provide counselors with the means to demonstrate their professional commitment to ethical and competent practice to the public through documentation of their training, experience and continued education in their respective specialty areas, which were to be clearly identified in their professional disclosure statements. In my opinion, that is the best way to educate the public about the benefits of counseling.

Further, I believe the use of the word “clinical” denotes a return to outmoded medical and disease-oriented models of counseling theory and practices. This is opposed to “developmental” models, which I believe the vast majority of counseling training programs utilize in their curriculums. However, those who believe that the title “clinical mental health counselor” fits their mode of practice should definitely use it and then state their professional qualifications in their professional disclosure statements.

I believe the title “licensed professional counselor” best reflects the primary purpose of licensure standards, which is to inform the public of our qualifications and commitment to ethical practices. It also provides an opportunity for the wonderful diversity of counselors to become licensed in their specialty areas, which can be further identified through certification.

Andy Huckfeldt
careermove@qwest.net

ACA can hang its hat on hurricane response
As a member of our association since my graduate school days (1968), and with all the work I have done in the areas of professional identity development, standards and licensure over the years, I am perhaps most proud of the fact that 20 percent of all hurricane relief volunteers came from ACA last year, significantly surpassing so many other professional organizations (see “When disaster strikes,” July 2006).

For me, this accomplishment verifies why I chose the professional counselor identity from the very beginning when we were struggling for identity. To all of you who were able to contribute and help appease this significant human tragedy, my hat is off to you. You have a colleague’s most sincere admiration.

Keep up the good work.
Edward S. Beck
friendymensch@aol.com

Harrisburg, Pa.

P.C.P. offers truer reflection of counseling profession
In my opinion, that is the best way to educate the public about the benefits of counseling.

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AGLBIC calls for papers for special journal issue
Submitted by Ned Farley
nfarley@antiochseattle.edu

The Association for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Issues in Counseling is inviting submissions for its first special edition of The Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling. The edition will focus on LGBT couples and families.

The intent of this special edition is to publish articles relevant to working with sexual minorities around issues pertinent to family and relationships. The articles should be of interest to counselors, counselor educators and other counseling-related professionals who work across a diversity of fields, including in schools, mental health settings, family agencies and colleges and universities. The journal welcomes article submissions that reflect our special focus and are pertinent to the health of sexual minority individuals and communities.

Articles should focus on one of the following areas: new research in the field of counseling; a review of the literature that critically integrates previous work around a specific topic; the introduction of new techniques or innovations in service delivery in the counseling field; or theoretical or conceptual pieces that reflect new ideas or new ways of integrating previously held ideas.

The submission deadline is Oct. 31, while the tentative publication date is June 2007. These dates are subject to change.

All submissions should be prepared according to the guidelines of the most recent Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, including the use of citations and references, and inclusion of nondiscriminatory language. Submissions should range between five and 50 pages. The journal will be published in hard copy, but manuscripts should be sent electronically as attachments via the e-mail address below. All work should be done in Microsoft Word. Tables and figures should be used only when essential, and illustrations or graphs should be embedded in the manuscript at the appropriate place.

Please make sure to include author contact information, including phone and e-mail. If accepted for publication, final manuscripts should be publication-ready when submitted. It is the responsibility of the authors to secure permission to use any copyrighted materials in their manuscripts. We ask that you indicate in your cover letter which of the journal’s focus areas (see above) best fits your article.

It is also expected that authors follow the current ACA Code of Ethics. It is understood that authors bear full responsibility for the accuracy of all references, quotations, tables, figures and the overall content of their articles.

Please identify submissions for this special edition by noting "LGBT Couples and Families" in your cover letter. Please submit articles to Ned Farley, Editor, The Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, at nfarley@antiochseattle.edu. All special edition submissions will be forwarded to our guest editors for review. Confirmation will be sent via e-mail.

In addition, please mail all appropriate signed copies of the Manuscript Submission and Limited Copyright Transfer Form required by Haworth Press Inc. to Ned Farley, Ph.D., The Center for Programs in Psychology, Antioch University.
The power of you
stay connected - stay informed - make a difference

Staying connected with the latest research on issues impacting our youth is important for anyone who works with them. Unfortunately, in today’s fast-paced world, finding the time to stay informed can be difficult. That is why more counselors and youth serving professionals are turning to the Prevention Researcher.

The Prevention Researcher provides evidence-based research and resources in a timely and concise manner. Visit us at www.TPRonline.org/CST and see how we can help you make a difference.

We now offer APA approved Continuing Education credits, visit www.TPRonline.org/CE for more details.
NCDA to host global conference in Seattle
Submitted by Deneen Pennington dpennington@ncda.org

The National Career Development Association Global Conference will be held July 6-8, 2007, at the Sheraton Seattle Hotel. This exciting event, with the theme of “Integration and Collaboration Within a Multicultural World,” will highlight programs that integrate theory, research and practice and improve career services for people of all cultural backgrounds, particularly those who traditionally have been marginalized and oppressed.

The conference will also focus on collaboration among professionals and various organizations in counseling and related fields as well as career service providers across countries of all continents. Featured sessions will include presentations from many international colleagues.

“While the world of work is increasingly globalized, such integration and collaboration efforts can be enhanced by being grounded in the movement of multiculturalism,” says NCDA President Y. Barry Chung. “Seattle seems to be a perfect backdrop for the 2007 conference due to its multicultural atmosphere and businesses of international enterprise.”

NCDA welcomes all ACA members to this special conference. Additional information is posted at www.ncda.org.

Fall 2006 training: Hallmark of NECA
Submitted by Kay Brawley kbrawley@mindspring.com

The National Employment Counseling Association is happy to present three opportunities this fall to help counselors and workforce development professionals enhance their skills.

There’s still time for those with whom you work to enroll in the workforce development and career counseling workshop: “Working Ahead Global Career Development Facilitation Instructor Training,” a National Board for Certified Counselors continuing education credit hours course. The all-inclusive fee of $850 includes two nights’ lodging, meals, training manuals and registry. The event will be held at the Wapiti Waterfront Retreat in North East, Md., Sept. 21-22. For additional details, contact NECA Professional Development Chair Kay Brawley at kbrawley@mindspring.com.

At the same beautiful waterfront location is “Follow Your True Colors to the Work You Love,” a certification training program that includes the assessment, workbook, training materials and the original book Follow Your True Colors to the Work You Love. NECA is sponsoring President-Elect Carolyn Kall’s hands-on interactive workshop Sept. 21-22. Counseling professionals will be trained to utilize the Follow Your True Colors personality system, an assessment tool based on the Keirsey temperament theory, in the career development process. Participants will learn to present Follow Your True Colors and its application with classes, groups and individuals in career counseling and coaching sessions. To register, go to www.truecolorscareer.com.

Lastly, in Madison, Wis., Oct. 25-26, is the distance counseling training sponsored by NECA. Distance counseling is an approach that takes the best practices of traditional counseling as well as some of its own unique advantages and adapts them for delivery to clients via electronic means to maximize the use of technology-assisted counseling techniques. The technology-assisted methods may include telecounseling, secure e-mail, chat, videoconferencing or computerized standalone software programs. To ensure that best practices, standards and use of appropriate techniques are followed, the Center for Credentialing and Education Inc., an affiliate of NBCC, has established a credential for counselors and those working in the helping professions — the distance credentialed counselor.

ReadyMinds has been selected by CCE as the sole provider to train counselors and workforce employees in the skills, techniques, best practices and standards in this rapidly developing distance counseling field. The training will take place from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. on day one and from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. on day two. The sessions will be held at the GEF I State Office Building, located at 201 E. Washington in Madison (Room H-206 on Wednesday and Room D-203 on Thursday). For more information, contact Roger H. Gantzarov at 608.266.8390 or roger.gantzarov@dwd.state.wi.us.
In Brief

Texas rule reaffirms importance of school counseling services

In late July, the Texas Education Agency issued regulations implementing a requirement that school districts spend 65 percent of their money on “instructional costs.” TEA had earlier proposed to follow the definition of this term adopted by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. The NCES definition of “instructional costs” does not include spending on school counselors, school nurses or librarians.

The Texas Counseling Association, a branch of the American Counseling Association, worked hard to convince TEA to amend its definition and achieved some success. Under the final regulations issued by TEA, two indicators of school districts’ financial accountability were adopted, one using the existing NCES definition (which does not include school counselors, nurses or librarians) and one using a modified NCES definition (which does include spending on school counselors, nurses and librarians). Each indicator is given equal weight in determining school districts’ financial accountability.

TCA was instrumental in gaining the submission of scores of comments to TEA on the proposed rule, urging the inclusion of school counselors in the definitions. TCA’s comments emphasized that “school counselors are a critical part of any instructional team.”

For additional information on the rules and the action by the Texas Education Commission, go to www.tea.state.tx.us/rulescommissioner/adopted/0706-109-1002-bidadopt.html. TCA has also posted information regarding the regulation on its website at www.tcca.org.

KCA’s Braden receives Nallia Award for education leadership

Bill Braden, executive director of the Kentucky Counseling Association, a branch of ACA, was presented with the 2006 William T. Nallia Award at the 37th Annual Conference of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators in Louisville on July 21.

The KASA Board of Directors presents the Nallia Award annually to an education leader who reflects a spirit of innovation and cutting-edge leadership while bringing higher levels of success and learning to all children. The award is named in honor of William T. Nallia, KASA’s executive director from 1975-1986.

“Braden has made a powerful impact on Kentucky’s schools through decades of leadership in school counseling, both in the commonwealth and the nation,” said a press release announcing his selection. Braden has served as the executive director of the Kentucky Counseling Association for more than 20 years. In addition, he is a past president of KASA and the Kentucky Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. He has also been instrumental in arranging conference exhibits for the Kentucky Counseling Association and the Kentucky School Counselor Association at KASA’s annual conferences.

Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit was also presented with a 2006 Nallia Award.

NAMI weighs in on Andrea Yates decision

Michael J. Fitzpatrick, executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said in a statement on July 26 that justice had been served when a Texas jury found that Andrea Yates was “not guilty by reason of insanity” when she drowned her five children in 2001.

“Too often, tragedies are only compounded by tragedies,” he said. “In this case, NAMI trusts that Andrea Yates will get the treatment she needs in a secure and appropriate psychiatric hospital. Even if she is released at some future point in time, she will likely be subject to continual court monitoring. Andrea Yates was sick. We praise the jury for recognizing that fact.”

Fitzpatrick added that NAMI hopes the two trials and ultimate verdict in the case will contribute to a broader public recognition and understanding of severe mental illnesses, particularly postpartum depression, psychosis, hallucinations and delusions. He noted that insanity defenses are rarely raised and rarely succeed. He also added that the criminal justice system is usually ill-suited to address issues involving mental illness as it tries to impose legal logic on biological irrationality.

“Human tragedies must lead not simply to individual trials. Broader inquiries are needed, particularly to determine where the mental health care system may have failed prior to those tragedies that do occur,” he said. “Whatever else happens to Andrea Yates, her children will have died in vain unless we as a society address that fundamental concern.”

Yep appointed to ASAE Diversity Committee

ACA Executive Director Richard Yep was recently selected to serve as a member of the Diversity Committee for the American Society of Association Executives and the Center for Association Leadership. The Diversity Committee works to promote diversity and inclusion in association management, develops recommendations for making ASAE and CAL leadership and membership more diverse and helps allied societies to develop diversity programs. The committee also coordinates the Diversity Executive Leadership Program.
A hurricane of personal growth

I had been working as a counselor for three years, but I was quite unhappy in the position. It was just not a good fit for me, even if the job was in the hometown that I loved, New Orleans. It was time to make changes and follow through on the last step of my educational journey. I researched different programs and schools that were of interest to me and narrowed them down to those that seemed like good matches.

After applying, I was invited for an interview at my first choice of schools in February 2005. One week later, the news arrived that I had been accepted! My hard work had paid off; I could finally pursue my long-stressed goal of obtaining a doctoral degree. It was time to begin the first step of my educational journey.

The turning point came when Hurricane Katrina struck. I called the cell phones of family and friends to see if they were fine, but they had not heard from their homes. Everything I had worked for during the past 10 years — and at the very place I had longed to be a part of for at least 10 years — and at the very place I wanted to be. What could I do? My body felt numb both inside and out. I couldn’t make myself get up and go to school to begin this endeavor in which so much was invested.

I finally managed to pull myself together enough to get to school late that day — and the next and the next. I walked into my classes in a daze, but at the same time I had gained the only relief from the emotional insanity I was dealing with continuously, as I sat in my room, glued to the television. My family and friends were fine, but they had lost everything except for the clothes on their backs and a couple of other outfits they had thought would last them the day or two they expected to be gone from their homes. Everything I had left behind was destroyed, including three homes and the income they provided. It felt as though I had nothing — no past, no present, no future.

School was the only place I didn’t cry. I cried for family and friends who had lost everything, including pictures of my now deceased grandmother and grandfather, birth certificates, baby pictures, prom pictures and other items of personal value that can never be replaced, no matter how much others donate. I cried for my city, my house, and for just about everything it seemed. This storm had hit precisely during what was such a significant, life-changing point for me.

Everyone was very empathetic at school and elsewhere, but no one could really understand the magnitude of what I was going through. But somehow, even though it was an extremely vulnerable time in my life, I was also experiencing major growth as a person.

Growth from the ruins

Going through the first year of a demanding Ph.D. program while also being impacted by one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history changed my life significantly. The surprise is that it definitely changed me for the better. In many ways, Hurricane Katrina stripped me bare and took away the security blankets that had provided me with hiding places. History, money and possessions no longer defined me, for they were gone. I was left exposed so that all eyes could see what I was at my core.

Anger, disappointment and sadness were my daily emotions, but as the semester went on, I realized that everything that had happened was not just about me. There came a point when I stopped asking “Why me? Why my city? Why my family?” Stripped of everything, it began to dawn on me that these “things” I had acquired were just that — “things.” This realization freed me to find myself.

The turning point came when I realized how material possessions could be taken away in the blink of an eye. Looking back over the course of my life, it became obvious that the most profound moments were those spent with loved ones. It was family, friends and people in general who made my life special. Family provided the backbone so that we could confide in one another, express joys and struggles on a daily basis and know we were being heard, understood and cared about. In

Continued on page 44
Q: Would it be advantageous to accept credit card payments in my practice?

A: In the past, most health care providers were hesitant to accept credit card payment. Perhaps it was due to a lack of client demand. Also, accepting credit cards for counseling services somehow seemed strange, or else there was lack of knowledge of how to go about it. But today, more and more private practitioners are making credit card payment an option in their practices. It gives your clients another option to pay for your services, as the use of checkbooks and cash seem to be fading. Moreover, major employers are starting to issue employees debit cards to access their pre-tax dollars contributed to a medical flexible spending account. That way an employee doesn’t have to submit receipts and wait to be reimbursed. We believe this trend will continue, so accepting credit cards would be a good decision.

Accepting credit cards is also advantageous for the counselor. You no longer have to deal with NSF checks (insufficient funds), money is deposited that day, and it helps defray billing costs. To begin accepting credit cards, you will need to set up a “merchant account.” These accounts can be opened at your local bank or wherever merchant account services are available. But be prepared: These merchant account contracts can be confusing, and prices vary widely. One-year fees can range from $250 to more than $800 for the same services. Costs can include a percentage of the dollar account, item transaction fees, monthly maintenance fees (with a monthly minimum), application and/or membership fees and equipment purchases or leases. So make sure you fully understand all the charges and contract obligations. As other counselors in your area what bank or service they use to get the best rates.

Q: American Counseling Association membership would like to have a “one-stop” place to access managed care links, billing information, website resources, National Provider Index registration and HIPAA compliance information. Can such a resource be developed?

A: The answer to this question is “YES!” We have just completed the latest update of the list of the 56 largest managed care companies, employee assistance programs and insurance companies. The list includes mailing addresses, phone numbers to provider relations and a direct hyperlink to the provider relations page of each website. Each listing gives information about the number of employees covered, whether national or local, the amount paid to providers and the amount of paperwork.

In most cases a counselor can fill out an application to become a provider online (if credentialing requirements are met and there are openings in the counselor’s market and/or niche). There is also a direct link to the National Provider Identifier, which is now required by Blue Cross/Blue Shield and other insurance companies. Also included is a link to the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare. Through CQAH, a counselor can submit a credentialing application that can be accessed by more than 100 insurance and managed health care companies. The links give detailed information about application for NPI and CQAH. A hyperlink to HIPAA is also available.

This one-stop access is provided as a free service to ACA members and is located on the website at www.counseling.org/Counselors/PrivatePracticePointers.aspx. You will need to log on first with your member ID or member name and then your password. Call ACA Member Services at 800.347.6647 ext. 222 if you need a password to log on.

We hope this information makes it easier for private practitioners to better serve their clients. We also hope that it will help you make an informed decision on which managed care and insurance companies are best for you to join.

Robert J. Walsh and Norman C. Dasenbrook are co-authors of The Complete Guide to Private Practice for Licensed Mental Health Professionals (www.counseling-privatepractice.com). ACA members can e-mail their questions to walshgasp@aol.com and access a series of free bulletins on various private practice topics on the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org
A relational-cultural approach to building unity and vision: Part II

This article is the second in a four-part series that explores Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) and its relevance to the work which counselors do in the field. In this month’s column, we build on the issues addressed in the first part of the series by exploring several concepts central to RCT. The concepts will provide a theoretical basis that can expand counselors’ understanding of some of the key issues that are important to address in fostering revolutionary changes in the fields of counseling and psychology in general and the American Counseling Association in particular.

The first column examined how mutual empathy and connections and disconnections, as defined in RCT, impact human development. The primary goal of this article is to define additional RCT terms and concepts, such as “central relational paradox,” “controlling relational images” and “blocks to authentic relating.” In discussing the impact that blocks to authentic relating may have on people’s lives, we examine some of the ways in which various organizations, including ACA, inadvertently promote such blocks. These unintentional blocks foster exclusionary practices that undermine the full participation of marginalized and devalued groups in organizational settings. Finally, we briefly examine how RCT concepts can be used in overcoming obstacles as counselors work to create more relational and socially just practices in organizations such as ACA.

Behind the central relational paradox
The foundation of RCT, which is supported by a growing body of research, including empirical studies in neurobiology, is built upon the idea that human beings yearn for connection in all their respective developmental and relational contexts. RCT also acknowledges that in spite of our yearnings for connection, we all experience strategies of disconnection, which is a central consideration of RCT. The tendency for people to manifest various connections and disconnections in the face of their yearning at different points in their lives is referred to as the “central relational paradox.”

The strategies people use in exercising different types of connections and disconnections with others are unique to each of us. The ways people’s efforts to formulate connections and the strategies employed when disconnecting with others are influenced by a host of factors, including an individual’s converging background, familial patterns, identity markers and history of trauma, to name a few.

Disconnecting strategies can range from emotional withdrawal to physical violence to social isolation. Ultimately, people try to share in interpersonal interactions. While all organizations are impacted by the types of connections and disconnections individuals manifest toward one another, very few organizations utilize RCT concepts, which are intentionally aimed at preventing mutual and authentic interactions. This column recognizes that the central relational paradox (disconnecting in spite of yearning for relational connection) represents adaptive strategies that are manifested in the lives of all individuals, both inside and outside of organizational settings. We therefore emphasize the need to create greater opportunities for authentic connections and mutual empathy in a world that continues to operate from culturally stratified, exclusionary and oppressive practices. The continued perpetuation of these forms of stratification, exclusion and oppression — in our contemporary society in general and organizational settings in particular — foster what RCT theorists refer to as “power-over dynamics.”

Examining power-over relational constructs
RCT theorists assert that “power-over relational dynamics” are commonly reflected in most of the interactions we have with other people. This includes interactions with our clients, colleagues, mentors, professors, students, supervisors and leaders in our professional organizations. These power-over relational dynamics make it difficult and risky for persons in subordinate positions to express their authentic feelings about the nature of their interactions in individual and organizational settings.

While it is challenging for dominant persons in power-over positions to listen and be responsive to the thoughts, feelings and needs expressed by individuals in subordinate positions, responsiveness is essential to building relationships that reflect the mutual empathy and authenticity which are foundational to RCT. Unfortunately, many persons in dominant positions in organizational settings, much like dominant groups in the larger culture, are often unresponsive to persons in marginalized groups and backgrounds. This lack of responsiveness leads to different forms of shaming and silencing. Such silencing and shaming commonly represents the dominant person’s resistance to change and an effort to maintain a particular “image” that preserves perceived levels of power within the status quo.

RCT suggests that anytime we consciously or unconsciously operate from a power-over “image,” we move out of connection with others. In doing so, people diminish their ability to realize new and transformational connections with other connections rooted in mutual empathy and authenticity. This dynamic plays out not only in familial interactions, friendships and client-counselor relationships but in organizational settings as well. In a broader context, RCT theorists point out that organizational growth requires the sort of courage, dialogue and constructive conflict resolution that promotes mutual empathy and interpersonal authenticity. In turn, this diminishes the power-over dynamics that undermine many of the disconnections that characterize organizational life.

RCT emphasizes that the degree of courage and safety one experiences when interacting with others in organizational settings is directly related to how much power or mutuality one experiences or expects in relationships with others. RCT theorists also note that it takes a certain type of courage and vulnerability for people to authentically express their thoughts, feelings and needs in organizational settings. This is especially true when “controlling images” are played out in interactions that maintain dominant-subordinate relational dynamics.

Controlling images
Numerous multicultural theorists, including Peggy McIntosh, bell hooks and Patricia Hill-Collins, have influenced RCT. In her book Black Feminist Thought (2000), Hill-Collins describes the notion of “controlling images,” particularly as they impact African-American women.

She suggests that the dominant cultural-racial group in the United States promotes “stereotypical images” that are used to control Black women and justify various forms of oppression related to sexism and racism. RCT posits that controlling images are utilized to perpetuate the oppression of persons in marginalized and devalued groups by maintaining power-over dynamics both in society and in organizations.

From an RCT perspective, these controlling images covertly operate to maintain and normalize the oppressive nature of cultural and social stratification that persists in our nation. Controlling images distort relational possibilities by:

Limiting individuals’ perceptions of who they are and what they can become in the world

Diminishing people’s capacity to interact in mutual empathy and authentic ways with others, especially those who are in power-over positions

RCT resists the constraining nature of controlling images and strives to stimulate more positive, healthy and egalitarian relational images and interactions in organizational settings. RCT can be used as a model for organizational transformation as persons in dominant and subordinate positions are encouraged to examine the impact that controlling images have within their specific organization. This, in turn, can help organizations learn new ways to implement intervention strategies that are intentionally aimed at nurturing mutual empathy and social inclusion.

Professional organizations such as ACA could begin this empowering collective endeavor by making time for persons in dominant and subordinate positions to:

Examine the different ways that power-over dynamics are perpetuated in the organization
Identify the different types of controlling images that help to maintain these power-over dynamics
Explore new ways of operating that will ameliorate the sources of resistance and disconnection, leading to new, more vibrant and more authentic relationships within ACA

What ACA can do to support RCT concepts
Counselors have a responsibility, as change agents, to promote positive changes in professional organizations such as ACA. This can be accomplished, in part, by encouraging all members of ACA to participate in the creation of a new vision for this important professional organization. As RCT advocates, we suggest the counseling profession needs a vision that is much more inclusive and holistic and includes an explicitly stated commitment to promoting multicultural counseling and social justice advocacy competencies.

The creation of such a vision needs to be guided by a heightened sense of mutual empathy and authentic interaction between all this organization’s members and leaders — and especially among those mem-
We further suggest that efforts to promote a greater sense of inclusion be facilitated by leaders who intentionally strive to eliminate power-over dynamics that emerge from controlling images.

ACA has a unique opportunity to take its commitment for cultural inclusivity to new organizational heights. It can use many of the RCT concepts discussed in both this column and the previous column as guidelines to create a new and more unified vision for the counseling profession.

By implementing organizational development strategies rooted in RCT concepts, ACA can serve as a model for other large professional organizations. All these organizations would benefit from effectively promoting the types of mutually empathic and authentic interpersonal interactions that lead to more democratic, inclusive and transformational changes.

Fundamentally, this would require ACA leaders to create a space in which the voices of persons who feel excluded from much of the politics and policy-making processes that characterize our professional organization could be heard. These persons should be included in future vision-building and organizational development processes.

ACA leaders would do well to think about implementing new RCT organizational development strategies that foster greater levels of inclusivity, mutual empathy and authenticity. These strategies should be implemented now and in preparation for the 2007 ACA Convention in Detroit, where thousands of counselors will gather to discuss the challenges we face as a professional group.

Several RCT and multicultural-social justice counseling advocates met recently with ACA President Marie Wakefield and ACA President-Elect Brian Canfield to discuss many of the ideas presented in this column. This resulted in exploring some of the practical things that could be done at the 2007 and 2008 ACA conventions to address the power-over dynamics fueled by controlling images. These images unintentionally promote exclusionary organizational practices that are not in the long-term interest of any large professional organization.

Both Marie Wakefield and Brian Canfield are to be commended for demonstrating an open-mindedness to exploring an RCT-multicultural-social justice approach to organizational development during this initial meeting. Future discussions are being planned to see how the concepts presented in this column, as well as other multicultural-social justice constructs, could be useful in building a new vision for the counseling profession and promoting a greater level of inclusivity and vibrancy in ACA.

The remaining two articles that will complete this four-part series will discuss plans to implement RCT and multicultural-social justice organizational development strategies in ACA in the future.

Note: This article is dedicated to Jean Baker Miller, the founding scholar of Relational-Cultural Theory, who died at her home in Brookline, Mass. on July 30.
COMING EVENTS

ACCA Conference
Oct. 3-6
Reno, Nev.

The third national American College Counseling Association Conference, “Exploring New Frontiers in College Counseling,” will be held at John Ascuaga’s Nugget Casino Resort in Reno. The Nevada College Counseling Association is co-sponsoring the conference. ACCA is approved to provide continuing education for the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC Provider #1024) and the American Psychological Association (licensed psychologists). For more information, visit www.collegecounseling.org/conferences.html.

Puerto Rico Counseling Convention
Oct. 18-20
San Juan, Puerto Rico

The Puerto Rico Counseling Association will host its annual convention at the Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino. Contact Martel Pérez at apec_asosconse jeria@yahoo.es for complete details.

Dance/Movement Seminar
Oct. 19
Long Beach, Calif.

This full-day seminar offers mental health professionals the opportunity to learn how to discover and trust their innate ability to “attend” empathically, respond authentically and translate nonverbal experiences into cognitive insights. Experiential body/mind exercises will be used along with didactic presentation to integrate a more embodied approach into traditional psychotherapy theory and practice. For additional information, call the American Dance Therapy Association at 410.997.4040 or Susan Kleiman at 954.698.9222 ext. 2087 or e-mail Skdm2@bellsouth.net.

MCA Annual Conference
Oct. 22-24
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Michigan Counseling Association Annual Conference, “The Power of Counseling,” will be held at the Amway Plaza Hotel. The conference will include three keynote addresses and more than 80 breakout sessions. For more information, contact Christine Larson at cl@prodigy.net or go to www.michigan counseling.org.

NBCC Global Mental Health Congress
Oct. 22-24
New Delhi, India

The National Board for Certified Counselors has announced plans for the first Global Mental Health Congress: “Focus on the Voice Served.” This invitation-only congress is for professional, academic and government leaders in the counseling and mental health fields. It will feature the introduction of the worldwide Mental Health Facilitator program created by NBCC International in collaboration with the World Health Organization, Benedetto Saraceno, director of WHO’s Department of Mental Health and Substances Abuse, and Harriet Mayor Fulbright, chair of the Fulbright International Center, will serve as keynote speakers. All inquiries should be directed to nbccinternational@nbcc.org.

PCA Conference
Oct. 27-29
State College, Pa.

The Pennsylvania Counseling Association’s 38th annual conference is organized around the theme “Healing Mind, Body and Spirit.” It will be held at the Penn State Conference Center Hotel in State College. For more information, go to www.pacounseling.org.

International Career Development Conference
Nov. 1-5
Santa Clara, Calif.

The International Career Development Conference theme for 2006 is “InTEGRATING High-Tech Tools to a Hi TCH Field.” This is the largest conference for career development professionals. The organization expects to attract more than 7,000 attendees from the United States, Canada, Europe, Africa, South America and the Pacific Rim. All conference programs will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara. The conference is co-sponsored by the Career Planning and Adult Development Network (NETWORK), California Career Information Systems (EUREKA) and the California Career Development Association (CCDA). Visit www.carer ccc.com for information on registration, or call Janet SaunDer at 650.359.6911.

WCA Fall Summit
Nov. 4
Stevens Point, Wis.

The Wisconsin Counseling Association will present its fall summit at Mid-State Technical College. Be sure to check out www.wicounseling.org for more details, or e-mail Charles V. Lindsey at lindseyc@uwstout.edu.

FYI

Call for applications
A. Scott McGowan, editor of the Journal of Counseling & Development, is seeking applicants for three-year appointments to the JCD Editorial Board. Counselors with editorial experience and a record of scholarship relevant to the domain of JCD are encouraged to apply. Applications in refereed journals are required. Given the broad scope of the journal, applications are being sought from people who represent all the various specialty areas of counseling. The journal is also looking to increase ethnic and racial diversity and to achieve a geographic balance on the board. Although not required in the letter of application, evidence of information related to the above characteristics is appreciated. Applicants must be members of the American Counseling Association and must agree to provide high-quality reviews on a timely basis. Interested professionals are invited to review the quantitative research manuscripts that will identify their areas of expertise in terms of research design and statistics.

Reviewers for qualitative research are also needed. Applications must be made electronically, but hard copies must also be sent. Because JCD is moving to a complete electronic manuscript submission and review process, prospective reviewers must have an e-mail address and must be prepared to forward reviews electronically.

To apply, send the following materials electronically as attachments to jcd@liu.edu: a letter of application describing qualifications and areas of expertise, a vita and a list of publications. In addition, send hard copies, along with a recent representative publication of an article the applicant has successfully published in a refereed journal, via regular mail to A. Scott McGowan, Editor, JCD, Department of Counseling & Development, Long Island University/C.W. Post Campus, 720 Northern Blvd., Brookville, NY 11548. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Call for papers, manuscripts
Multicultural Learning and Teaching is a new multidisciplinary international journal devoted to the education of people from multicultural backgrounds. Emphasis is placed on the interpretation of research literature and recommendations for the practice of multicultural education. Appropriate topics for articles include, but are not limited to, identification, assessment, labeling/categorization, placement and instruction of underachieving, at-risk, urban, rural, linguistically different or exceptional children, youth and adults with diverse multicultural life experiences and backgrounds. Manuscripts on research or community-related services, legislation, litigation and professional preparation are also of interest. Additional information, including guidelines for authors, is available at www.mltonline.org.

The Association for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Issues in Counseling invites submissions to its journal, The Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling. The journal’s intent is to publish articles relevant to working with sexual minorities that will be of interest to counselors, counselor educators and other counseling-related professionals who work across a variety of fields, including in schools, mental health settings, family agencies and colleges and universities.

The journal welcomes article submissions that reflect issues pertinent to the health of sexual minority individuals and communities. It should be understood that authors bear full responsibility for the accuracy of all references, quotations, tables, figures and the overall content of their articles. For complete guidelines on submitting articles, authors must contact Ned Farley, editor, The Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling at nfarley@antioch.edu.

The Journal of Addictions and Offender Counseling is currently seeking manuscripts that highlight a wide range of topics related to addictions and offender counseling. Topic areas include traditional substance abuse treatment and recovery, process addictions, spirituality and addiction, best practices in offender counseling, college-aged adolescents and addiction, families and addiction, influence of multiculturalism on addiction and offender counseling, suicide and addiction, and policy development in addiction and offender counseling. Authors are encouraged to contact the editorial assistant (theresa_garcia@bellsouth.net) for current guidelines as well as a copy of the most recent editorial review form (quantitative, qualitative, innovative approach or position paper) to aid in formatting. Manuscripts and cover letters can be submitted directly to the editor (Bryce. Hagedorn@fiu.edu).

Women Moving Forward, the 2nd Interdisciplinary Conference, will be held on March 31, 2007, in Miami. The subtheme is “Justice: Toward a System of Right Relationships.” Proposals are welcomed for a 20- to 30-minute original paper/panel/poster presentation on any aspect of the conference theme or related topics (counseling, arts, education, history, etc.). The proposal (one-page maximum) must include: name(s), personal title(s), institutional affiliation(s), paper title, abstract (100-word maximum), biographical details of presenter(s) (100-word maximum) and contact details. Deadline for submissions is Oct. 15 (notification of acceptance will take place by Dec. 1, and papers will be due on Feb. 1, 2007). Papers must not have been presented, published or accepted anywhere else, and they may be considered for publication. For complete writing guidelines, contact Judith Bachay at women conference@stu.edu or visit www.stu.edu/womenconference.html.

Bulletin Board submission guidelines
Entries for the “Bulletin Board” must be submitted via e-mail to okennedy@counseling.org with “Bulletin Board” in the subject line. Paragraphs (in complete sentences) should be in a Word document, single-spaced, justified, Times font in black. Provide a contact person with an e-mail address or number to call for more information. Do not send submissions with tables, bullet points, logos or brochures. All submissions are subject to editing. Deadline is the 10th of every month by close of business, ET.
do so. Technically, he had no legal right to the records.

HG: There have also been examples of celebrities whose counseling records were released to the media when the counselors of the celebrities died.

DK: From the issues and examples you list, it sounds like the need to have a transfer plan ties into the ethical imperative that we must not abandon clients.

HG: Exactly! And it also relates to the issue of informed consent.

DK: My assumption is that the transfer plan needs to be incorporated into the informed consent process.

HG: Yes, it should. Standard A.2.b. ("Types of Information Needed") of the revised ethical code notes that the informed consent process should include information about the continuation of services upon the incapacitation or death of the counselor.

RC: Clients should be given the plan in writing so that they know whom to contact if the counselor suddenly becomes unavailable. Counselors can easily do this by incorporating a transfer plan into their written informed consent document and making sure that clients receive a copy of this document.

DK: Is there a specific format counselors should utilize for their transfer plan?

HG: There is no one particular format. The Ethics Code Revision Task Force felt that specifying a format would be overly prescriptive. A counselor just needs to make sure that the important points are covered.

DK: What are the important points to cover in a transfer plan?

RC: The plan needs to state what clients should do to access their records and facilitate continued services if the counselor becomes inaccessible through death, disability or change of location.

HG: This would include explicitly stating in your informed consent brochure who the custodian of your records will be and the complete contact information for that person. This custodian should then notify active clients upon receipt of the records.

DK: Should the plan also include staff?

HG: Yes. The administrative assistant, receptionist or another counselor within your practice should be informed about the plan so that he or she knows where to transfer the records. This colleague or staff member can also give out the custodian’s contact information if clients have misplaced their copy of the informed consent brochure.

DK: For those in independent practice, what are the options for choosing a custodian?

RC: Ideally, it should be another mental health professional.

HG: The most logical person would be the colleague you use for backup or on-call purposes when you are away or otherwise unavailable.

DK: Would either a lawyer or a certified public accountant be acceptable as a records custodian?

HG: I would be more comfortable with a mental health professional or someone who is part of the practice and already has access to the records, such as the administrative assistant or receptionist.

RC: Using a professional counselor or other mental health professional as your records custodian speaks to the need for confidentiality. Standard B.6.h. ("Reasonable Precautions"), a related standard to the one we are discussing, states that “Counselors take reasonable precautions to protect client confidentiality in the event of the counselor’s termination of practice, incapacity or death.”

DK: Is a handshake agreement with your records custodian enough?

RC: No. Whoever the custodian is, the arrangement should be in writing. If it is only a verbal agreement, your estate may decide not to honor your wishes.

DK: Any final thoughts on this new standard of the ACA Code of Ethics?

HG: This standard is particularly germane to those who are discussing, states that the new standard of the ACA Code of Ethics...
particularly students, and to participate in the awards process and ACA overall.

Felicia Pressley

I am most excited about my new interest and involvement on the ACA-GSA (Graduate Student Association) Mentorship Committee. I plan to work really hard to promote the profession of counseling and the involvement of the committee to assist new students in navigating the process of becoming a professional.

Tequila Thomas

When I think about going back to school, I am excited by the simple things. I look forward to meeting new students like myself who are interested in some of the same things and working toward some of the same goals. I am just starting a doctoral program and expect this school year to be full of challenges, and just thinking of that excites me!

Marja Humphrey

I am so excited about this upcoming semester! As a third-year doctoral student, I will be finishing all of my course work and advancing to candidacy. I will also launch full force into my dissertation proposal. I am also looking forward to the fall because I will be presenting at the SACES (Southern Association for Counseling Education and Supervision) conference in Orlando, Fla. Having been a part of the ACA Blue Ribbon Panel for the annual convention, I can’t wait for Detroit!

Most of all, this semester seems to be the beginning of my transition from student to professional. I am thinking more and more every day about my future career as a counselor educator and looking for opportunities to strengthen my teaching, research, and practice. What has been most exciting lately is getting involved with ACA and meeting others in the field. The wisdom gained from more experienced counselors has been invaluable to me as I continue to grow as a counselor. I look forward to all that is ahead!

Angela Shores

I graduated with my M.A. in community counseling in May 2006 and am starting my Ph.D. in counselor education in August 2006. I’m most excited about getting back to class because I love being able to apply what I have learned with what I’m doing professionally and the opportunities to be involved on the state and national level with ACA. Each is a steppingstone for greater participation. It’s a great combination, and I’m excited to get back into the full mix of things!

Amney Harper

As ACA-GSA president, I am very excited about our first year! It is amazing to meet and work with students and professionals from all over the country. I am particularly excited about setting a solid foundation for ACA-GSA that is representative of all students. We have an excellent group working already as ACA-GSA officers and committee members and co-chairs. Personally, I am hoping to graduate by the end of next summer. I am very excited about my last year and making the transition from student to professional.

Jennifer Dean

I am looking forward to developing my skills as a social advocate-counselor by serving on the Human Rights Committee before going out into the professional world. My experiences working as a counselor have opened my eyes to the injustices that people of color, those who are GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender), those who live in poverty and those living with disabilities experience in their daily life. This has motivated me to try and redefine my role as a counselor to include social advocacy. I look forward to all that I can contribute and learn from this group and so many social justice advocates within ACA.

Earn more than 30 CE credits at ACA Convention

Attendees of the 2007 American Counseling Association Annual Convention and Exposition, which will be held March 21-25 in Detroit, will be able to earn more than 30 hours of continuing education credits. Attendees can earn the optimum number of CE credits by attending both days of the preconvention Learning Institutes and all three days of the main part of the convention.

How does this work? The Learning Institutes will be offered during the day as well as in the evenings, allowing attendees to earn nine hours of CE credits each day. For example, if you attend one daytime Learning Institute, which runs from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and then attend another one that evening from 5:30-8:45 p.m., you would earn nine hours for the day. With two full days of Learning Institutes (March 21-22), you can earn 18 hours of CE credits before the convention even begins. (Daytime Learning Institutes offer six hours of CE credit, while the evening sessions offer three hours.)

Then, during the main part of the convention, if you attend sessions throughout the day on each of the three days (March 23-25), you can earn up to an additional 14.5 hours of CE credit. In less than one week, you may be able to earn all or most of the credits you need for licensure renewal, depending on your state’s requirements.

The complete schedule for Learning Institutes is posted on the ACA website (www.counseling.org/convention) and will be included in the advanced registration brochure that all members will receive in October. ACA Manager of Learning Resources Holly Clubb anticipates that attendees will be able to select from approximately 35 Learning Institutes in Detroit. “There will be a good mix of popular sessions that earned the highest ratings in previous years as well as new sessions on a variety of topics,” Clubb says.

ACA offers the Learning Institutes to enable attendees to earn additional continuing education credits while gaining in-depth knowledge in a particular area. To help attendees make appropriate selections, each Learning Institute is identified by one of four levels: introductory, intermediate, advanced or comprehensive. The presenter determines the level assigned to each Learning Institute.

The Learning Institutes have been extremely popular year after year, Clubb says. They allow attendees who are traveling anyway to rack up more training and more CE credit while also experiencing the major counseling convention in the world, she points out. Based on inquiries Clubb is receiving already for Detroit, she anticipates even higher registration for the Learning Institutes in 2007. Clubb advises prospective registrants to register early because sessions do fill up and sometimes get closed out.

There is a separate registration fee for the preconvention Learning Institutes. The fee ranges from $70 to $135 for ACA members who register prior to Nov. 30. Nonmember general attendees pay $185 for daytime sessions and $145 for evening sessions. All Learning Institute fees as well as regular convention registration rates increase on Dec. 1.

To view the complete list of Learning Institutes, visit www.counseling.org/convention. Inquiries can also be directed to ACA Professional Learning at 800.347.6647 ext. 306.
national level as a student representative for the Human Rights Committee. As I continue to transition from the student world of learning to the academic world as a professor, I look forward to critical thinking from my faculty and peers, the process called IRB, the laughs, the tears, the presentations, the research and the joy of growing as a professional in the world of counseling. More importantly, I think about the learning process as a student. This is my time to learn and grow, for in the next season, I will be doing the same for someone else. I will be the next mentor to pass the torch of learning, opening the world to a new life to an eager student, to a new season of “back to school.”

Anneliese Singh
I am excited about many things as I participate on the Diversity Committee of the Graduate Student Association. We believe that one of the best ways to increase our awareness of multicultural issues as students is to work directly with people. To push ourselves to move from multiculturalism to social justice advocates, we think it is critical that we strategically create ways that students can get out of the classrooms and practica sites and into the streets where real-life suffering happens. We also know that our best learning on multicultural issues comes from our relationships, so we are brainstorming ways that our committee can provide increased opportunities for students to examine diversity issues in our relationships with one another. We are looking forward to building a truly diverse GSA and welcome all to work with us in our efforts.

Amy Childers
This year, I’ve decided to live by the words of Socrates: “An unexamined life is not worth living.” So I’m excited to really stretch myself to a deeper level of self-awareness through learning, networking and experience. I’m excited to utilize this philosophy as I begin my internship, teaching assistantship and presidential involvement in BGSU’s (Bowling Green State University’s) Chi Sigma Iota. I’m especially excited to learn and practice more about my two passions — the person as a whole (spiritual, physical and emotional), and multicultural and diversity awareness.

Nurturing future leaders
As professional counselors, professors, mentors, co-workers and advocates, we have opportunities to safeguard the excitement these students feel as they step into their new roles. They have worked and studied hard to be the best that they can be. Their high level of energy and desire to be involved professionally speaks very well about the future of the profession.

For those of you who are in your mid and later career phases, I hope that you feel refreshed and energized when nurturing the future leaders of ACA and our profession. I encourage you to accept this challenge as part of our professional legacy. I remember those who helped me to nurture me when I was starting out. If nothing else, I know that I owe it to those who helped me to help those who will follow.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will feel free to communicate with me via e-mail at mwakefield@cox.net or by calling 800.347.6647 ext. 232.
Student Focus
Continued from page 36

addition to family, other people were demonstrating that they were willing to lend a hand, even as the world sometimes seemed so full of corruption, war and selfishness. Things normally given no second thought were now recognized as being invaluable to people’s lives. The importance of giving to others, whether in the form of money, gifts or just time, is immense. It is remarkable how little can go so long a way.

Two of the homes I rented out in New Orleans to support my family had as much as nine feet of water outside and six feet inside. But what was most important was that my family members were safe. I lost the things I had left behind and had to downsize to a very little two-bedroom apartment, but my daughter and I were safe. The things I had worked so long for were now a distant memory, but the education could not be taken away. It was the one thing that could not be destroyed.

The devastation of New Orleans has provided me with an enormous-ly refreshed outlook not only on life but also on what it means to persevere. I learned the importance of receiving support from others. I gained the ability to ask for help in a time of need and to accept help when offered. Independence is not all cracks up to be, at least not in every situation.

I struggled through that first semester. I kept a smile on my face every day in public, but behind closed doors I hosted doubts about whether I could make it. There were times in the middle of the experience that were so overwhelming and emotionally exhausting that I could see no way out. But somehow I survived that first semester, even while dealing with the personal, emotional and financial aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The storm’s devastation still demands my attention and my hope will continue to do so for years to come. But midway through the second semester, I felt stronger than ever, with a sense of organization, time management and patience that I had never experienced before. I had somehow managed to stay focused on my studies and look toward the prize at the end of the journey.

This experience has centered me and made me aware of my short-comings as a person, while also revealing to me the important things in life. Being in the counseling profession during all of this has been my saving grace. I have been provided with the educational tools to see that a situation does not have to dictate who I am or what will become of me. I have been able to use counseling techniques to stay grounded and to remain aware that even though I have been placed in an unfortunate situation, the most important thing is how I choose to deal with it and to never give up.

As I talk with people from New Orleans, it is becoming clear that many of my themes are emerging in them as well. These themes are not just part of this disaster; most people can benefit from them no matter what the situation. I would never wish a disaster such as Katrina on anyone, but I do hope that others might learn some of the lessons that this storm managed to teach me in an astonishingly short period of time.

This is not a story about being a Hurricane Katrina victim. It is a story about overcoming the obstacles that have been placed in front of us to find new strengths and new understandings about life. It is about how to keep one’s dreams alive.

Tiffany Stewart (tstewart70122@yahoo.com) is a graduate student at the University of Akron. Richard Hazler is the column coordinator for Student Focus. Submit columns for consideration to hazler@psu.edu. Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org.
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NEW counseling resources for working with teens

The Shyness Workbook for Teens

Dr. Raymond D. Jacobson and Dr. Thomas H. Field

A valuable resource for counselors who work with shy teens in schools and in other settings. This hands-on workbook helps teens discover ways to become more confident instead of hiding it. Control them.

CG: What challenges do counselors who wish to establish a comprehensive, content-based guidance and counseling program face?

PH: One major one can be the nonguidance tasks that most school counselors are assigned. While it is recognized that school counselors need to take on their fair share of tasks that all school building faculty perform, counselors are assigned these duties beyond their fair share. While the book can't prevent that from happening, by presenting a practical, clearly outlined comprehensive guidance and counseling program, it makes it easier to get school administrators focused on what a counselor's main duties should be.

PH: I think the book also helps counselors change the way they think about the delivery of school guidance and counseling services, which is different than the way many counselors are used to. The book helps counselors make the transition from carrying out tasks in isolation, and often in reaction to others' demands, to instead conducting activities on a planned and intentional basis.

CT: Does this book address some of the new issues in schools brought up by No Child Left Behind programs?

NG: Yes! The book shows how comprehensive programs contribute to student success, including student academic achievement. It is a basic premise of the program that when schools have comprehensive guidance and counseling programs that enable school counselors to spend their professional time carrying out the preferred tasks and responsibilities of the program, students see education as relevant for them, they feel more connected to school and they do better academically.

CT: Who is the audience for this book?

PH: The book is written for school counselors and their supervisors and administrators. Reading it can gain or hone knowledge about how school counseling works best requires some professional understanding of school counseling. School administrators can learn a lot about a program's development, design and management process.

Developing & Managing Your School Guidance and Counseling Program, Fourth Edition, can be ordered directly from ACA (order #72843). The list price is $57.95, while the ACA member price is $39.95. Copies may be ordered online through the bookstore section of the ACA website (www.counseling.org) or by calling the ACA order line at 800.422.2648 ext. 222.

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Michelle Miller

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Resource Reviews

Cutting: Understanding and Overcoming Self-Mutilation

This expanded edition of the 1998 breakthrough book on cutting, a most difficult topic for counselors, is a welcome update. Despite the growing prevalence of this disturbing phenomenon (perhaps as many as 2 million Americans), many counselors feel uncertain about what cutting is and how best to respond. Levenkron clearly understands self-mutilation; his goal is not only to demystify the behaviors but also to help counselors and parents get beyond communicating their reactions of fear or even disgust in order to help those affected.

The book contains several compelling case studies that humanize cutting, showing it to be a complex response to a feeling of mental disintegration or an inability to think accompanied by rage that cannot be expressed, usually toward a parent. Counselors in most settings will recognize the clients depicted as realistic and challenging; in Levenkron’s eyes, they are also engaging and sympathetic. In fact, his writing is somewhat reminiscent of Oliver Sacks’ work in this regard.

Levenkron describes self-mutilators as people who find physical pain an escape from emotional pain. Those who choose this option see themselves as powerless and fear punishment for their perceived inadequacies. Obsessional thinking, eating disorders, depression, severe anxiety, addictions, etc., are frequent co-morbid conditions. Cutting, however, puts the person in charge of his (or, much more frequently, her) pain.

Polly, one of the new case studies, referred for extreme cutting. She has phobia about people with missing body parts, and Levenkron discovers that Polly learned to dissociate when her grandfather molested her. Her grandfather had diabetes and had lost his eyesight as well as several toes due to the disease. Levenkron notes that “cutters with dissociative disorders are the most endangered since they are out of conscious control and are for the most part victims of child/adolescent molestation or rape, often by family members.”

Less graphic examples are also included in the book. Parental neediness or neglect can result in a “patient who feels she can’t get angry at anyone but herself.”

Levenkron notes that self-mutilation is sometimes the final symptom to show up in cases involving severe depression and anxiety.

Levenkron recommends long-term counseling (and appropriate medication) to build trust, healthy attachments and strong communication skills with those struggling with cutting behavior. Interestingly, he does not mention cognitive or dialectical behavioral therapy, which has promising research regarding self-mutilation treatment.

Cutting provides a great deal of insight about a coping behavior that is often very hard to understand. Levenkron is a committed and active therapist who writes with wonderful sensitivity and wisdom. Reviewed by Ruth Harper, a professor in the department of Counseling and Human Resource Development at South Dakota State University.

Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled — and More Miserable Than Ever Before

Generation Me is a provocative examination of mainstream American culture since 1970, focusing on those individuals born in the last three decades of the 20th century. Do not think that Twenge has merely repackaged Generation X or something similar. After all, Douglas Coupland reminded us at the end of the hysteria over Generation X that it had it all, in fact, been much ado about fiction. Twenge’s work is a synthesis of her own research with references to other publications and data that allow comparisons to be made between Generation Me and previous generations.

What emerges is a well-developed perspective that by no means explains everything but most certainly creates a lens that magnifies certain observations.

Twenge offers a chapter on each attribute that defines Generation Me. She starts with this generation’s movement away from social mores toward an oddly collective mindset of doing one’s own thing. Combined with this generation’s preoccupation with self-disclosure and profanity, questions of healthy self-esteem arise.

In contrast, the next chapter argues that a good part of Generation Me’s existential dilemma has to do with its overexposure to the self-esteem movement. Members of Generation Me were raised to believe that any effort is good enough and that they can achieve their dreams in spite of what realities might get in the way (e.g., not having requisite talent). As a result, Generation Me can be further delineated by interpersonal alienation, manifest in spiked levels of anxiety, depression and, ultimately, loneliness.

Another interesting dynamic is addressed in a chapter that discusses both personal and social responsibility. Twenge points out Generation Me’s distrust and lack of participation in the political process. Simultaneously, Generation Me seems to be actively engaged in avoiding personal responsibility. This generation is quick to remind others that it is somebody else’s fault when they fall short.

Twenge explores changes in attitudes about sex between generations, noting that Generation Me has rather open views on sex as evidenced by the recreational practice of “hooking up.” She clearly demonstrates just how much attitudes related to sex have changed since the 1950s.

The book concludes on a positive note: Twenge reminds us that just as Generation Me has some frustrating attributes, it also has unique assets. For instance, the reader gets the idea that Generation Me stands to do better than previous generations with regard to issues of race, gender and sexuality. Though far from perfect, this group’s quickness contains promise and potential.

Twenge offers solid advice for parents, employers and others who may spend considerable time trying to figure out Generation Me. She even offers some excellent recommendations to members of Generation Me who may pick up her book. Twenge’s treatment of topics such as self-esteem and lack of personal responsibility are fair, as is her entire effort. As a fan of self-esteem and personal responsibility, I found myself wondering where her critique might lead. Instead of raising defenses, she inspires questions and critical thought.

This is a great book for those who work with Generation Me, whether in higher education settings, counseling settings or places of employment. Twenge has delivered a thought-provoking treatise that stands to open both dialogue and minds.

Reviewed by William “Chris” Bridlick, an assistant professor in the department of Counseling and Human Resource Development at South Dakota State University.

Simple Truths: On Values, Civility and Our Common Good

Simple truths, says Bauman, are often hidden in plain sight. In well-written one-page essays, everyday topics are raised and considered from new angles. Readers (or listeners) are intrigued and go about their business carrying fresh insights or questions to ponder.

The overall theme of the book might be seen as random acts of kindness, although some of the most memorable anecdotes are based on negative observations. The account of a stranger calming an agitated homeless man on the street is contrasted with the helpless comment of a small boy who says his name is “stupid,” because that’s what his dad calls him. Rhetorical questions, such as “When was the last time someone asked you to do something great?” lie amidst vivid and largely secular parables of commonplace virtue.

One caveat on this book: Astute words from highly diverse sources (Lincoln, Geronimo, Douglass, Buddha, Mandela, Potok, etc.) do not include the perspectives of famous women. The author’s wife and other women he encounters are quoted, but valuable perceptions from women writers, philosophers and the like are noticeably absent.

This book (or single essays from it) could be useful with adult clients and/or students. In particular, high school and college students will respond to the brief yet thought-provoking content. Messages that encourage empowerment and reflection are often rare in some students’ lives. The simple truths of this book are shared without sentimentality and will resonate for many people in a variety of situations.

Reviewed by Ruth Harper, a professor in the department of Counseling and Human Resource Development at South Dakota State University.

Ruth Harper is the column coordinator for Resource Reviews. Submit reviews for consideration to Ruth.Harper@sdsstate.edu.
My Mommy the rate structure analyst

Though most institutions and corporations manipulate their promotional materials to appear inclusive of both women and men, college women aren’t taken in by the spin, according to research done by Julie L. Quimby and Angela M. DeSancts and reported in the June 2006 issue of The Career Development Quarterly (pages 297-306).

When looking at career self-efficacy, role model influence and career choice considerations among 368 college women, the researchers found that the mean rating of Social and Enterprising type jobs still outstripped the other four Holland types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic and Conventional) among careers the women were considering.

Conventional) among careers the women were considering. The authors also suggest that young women perhaps continue to choose traditional, low-prestige, poorly paid occupations because of a preoccupation with their future roles in family life, which conflict with career pre-eminence.

Teenagers who bounce back from adversity

Counseling psychologists have historically been interested in what makes some people resilient to circumstances that create long-term misery in others. Generally, studies of adults have found that resilience is a three-factor construct: individual personality characteristics (such as optimism, for example), family support and cohesion, and external support systems.

A study by Odin Hjemdal, Oddgeir Friborg, Tore C. Stiles, Monica Martinussen and Jan H. Rosveng, all of Norway, sought to develop and validate a scale that assesses resilience among adolescents in particular. They discovered a five-factor model that fits 13- to 15-year olds best. The model includes personal competence, social competence, structured style, family cohesion and social resources. Thus, the scale specifies, in its first three factors, the personality characteristics usually lumped together in other models.

Girls rated access to social resources higher than boys did, while boys rated themselves higher in personal competence, a finding that is common in resilience studies, other research and everyday life. The Resilience Scale for Adolescents is described in the July 2006 issue of Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development (pages 84-96).

'Only children' aren't what they're cracked up to be

Negative stereotypes about “only children,” both in their youth and in adulthood, prevail not only in the United States but also in Great Britain, Korea, the Netherlands and China. The idea that single children are self-centered, narcissistic, spoiled, lonely, disagreeable and poorly socialized has been endorsed by parents, college students and counseling psychologists in research studies. But Adriean Mancillas reviewed the research literature on only children in the Summer 2006 Journal of Counseling & Development (pages 268-275).

This review shows that only children don’t deserve their bad image. In fact, most research shows them to be no different from children who have siblings when it comes to the areas of character, sociability and peer skills. Much of the research also finds only children scoring higher on intelligence, adjustment and personal achievement.

Adult only children report that they valued time alone, had close relationships with their parents and appreciated the financial advantages of being in one-child families. Furthermore, Mancillas argues that earlier research with negative findings about only children was mis-leadingly analyzed and blurred by preconceived false conceptions. This useful article is a must-read for counselors whose clients are currently making decisions about childbearing.

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Letters to the editor: ctj@counseling.org

Textbook author Susan X Day teaches research methods and advises graduate students in counseling education at the University of Houston. Contact her at sxday@houston.rr.com.

To subscribe to any of the journals mentioned in this column, call 800.633.4931.
Medicare Reimbursement of Licensed Professional Counselors

Rep. Barbara Cubin (R-Wyo.) has introduced legislation — H.R. 5324, the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2006 — to establish Medicare coverage of both licensed professional counselors and marriage and family therapists. The American Counseling Association strongly encourages all counselors to contact their representatives to ask them to co-sponsor H.R. 5324. In the last three years, the Senate has twice passed legislation establishing Medicare coverage of counselors, but each time a lack of support within the House of Representatives has kept counselor coverage from being enacted.

We need as many representatives as possible to co-sponsor H.R. 5324 to demonstrate to House leaders that establishing Medicare coverage of counselors is a good idea. Ask your representative to contact Rep. Cubin’s office to sign on as a co-sponsor of her important bill.

Department of Defense Recognition of Licensed Professional Counselors

The number of soldiers returning from Iraq with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental and emotional health problems is staggering. Yet federal law still requires that licensed professional counselors practice under physician referral and supervision in TRICARE, the military health care system, and in Department of Defense facilities. LPCs are the only mental health professionals not allowed to practice independently. Fortunately, a study by the RAND Corporation on the effects of a demonstration project allowing independent practice authority for LPCs found that this resulted in better access to care, no increase in costs and no adverse effect on TRICARE beneficiaries. The House has passed language, as part of the Fiscal Year 2007 bill authorizing defense spending, that would establish independent practice authority for licensed TRICARE mental health counselors. However, the Senate did not include this provision in its version of the bill. Congress is aiming to finish considering the FY 2007 National Defense Authorization Act as soon as possible, so it is vital that counselors contact their senators to urge adoption of the House-passed provision for independent reimbursement of counselors when senators discuss the issue in conference committee.

Appropriations for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program

In July, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a spending bill for Fiscal Year 2007 that would provide $34.7 million for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. This is the same amount the program received in FY 2006. Although ACA has been pushing for an increase in funding for ESSCP, the Senate bill’s $34.7 million funding level is $12.7 million more than the amount approved for the program in June by the House Appropriations Committee. We are pleased that both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have once again chosen to ignore President George W. Bush’s request to eliminate all funding for the school counseling program.

The FY 2007 battle to protect ESSCP may be our hardest yet, given the unprecedented spending cuts in domestic nondefense programs that Congress is currently considering. Although it is unlikely that the House or Senate will take up education appropriation legislation until after the November elections, it is imperative that concerned counselors take action now. Please contact your House and Senate members and ask them to support the Senate-approved funding level of $34.7 million for ESSCP in the final FY 2007 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations bill.

Who to Contact

Message

ACA Resource

Capitol Switchboard: 202.224.3121
202.224.3121
www.house.gov

I am calling to ask you to co-sponsor H.R. 5324, legislation to establish Medicare coverage for medically necessary mental health services provided by licensed professional counselors. Language establishing Medicare coverage of LPCs has passed the Senate twice in the past three years, and it is time for the House of Representatives to take action on this important issue for our district’s senior citizens.

“The lack of an adequate mental health benefit is harming Medicare beneficiaries. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, older Americans are the demographic group most likely to commit suicide. The pool of covered providers needs to be expanded to cover licensed professional counselors to allow better access to mental health treatment and more choice of provider. Please contact Rep. Cubin’s office to sign on as a co-sponsor of H.R. 5324. Thank you.”

Who to Contact

Your Senators

202.224.3121
www.senate.gov

ACA Resource

I am contacting you to ask for your support for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. ESSCP is the only federal program devoted solely to supporting counseling programs in our nation’s schools. I’d like the (senator/representative) to support a final appropriations bill that includes the Senate-approved funding of $34.7 million for the school counseling program.”

Who to Contact

Your Senators and Representatives

202.224.3121
www.house.gov
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ACA Resource

I’d like the (senator/representative) to support a final appropriations bill that includes the Senate-approved funding of $34.7 million for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. This is the same amount the program received in FY 2006. Although ACA has been pushing for an increase in funding for ESSCP, the Senate bill’s $34.7 million funding level is $12.7 million more than the amount approved for the program in June by the House Appropriations Committee. We are pleased that both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have once again chosen to ignore President George W. Bush’s request to eliminate all funding for the school counseling program.

The FY 2007 battle to protect ESSCP may be our hardest yet, given the unprecedented spending cuts in domestic nondefense programs that Congress is currently considering. Although it is unlikely that the House or Senate will take up education appropriation legislation until after the November elections, it is imperative that concerned counselors take action now. Please contact your House and Senate members and ask them to support the Senate-approved funding level of $34.7 million for ESSCP in the final FY 2007 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations bill.

“I am calling to ask you to co-sponsor H.R. 5324, legislation to establish Medicare coverage for medically necessary mental health services provided by licensed professional counselors. Language establishing Medicare coverage of LPCs has passed the Senate twice in the past three years, and it is time for the House of Representatives to take action on this important issue for our district’s senior citizens.

“The lack of an adequate mental health benefit is harming Medicare beneficiaries. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, older Americans are the demographic group most likely to commit suicide. The pool of covered providers needs to be expanded to cover licensed professional counselors to allow better access to mental health treatment and more choice of provider. Please contact Rep. Cubin’s office to sign on as a co-sponsor of H.R. 5324. Thank you.”

ACA Resource

Brian Altman
800.347.6647 ext. 242
baltman@counseling.org

Internet briefing paper:
www.counseling.org/publicpolicy

Capwiz “Contact Congress!” site:
http://capwiz.com/counseling

“I am contacting you to ask for your support for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. ESSCP is the only federal program devoted solely to supporting counseling programs in our nation’s schools. I’d like the (senator/representative) to support a final appropriations bill that includes the Senate-approved funding of $34.7 million for the school counseling program.”

ACA Resource

Chris Campbell
800.347.6647 ext. 241
ccampbell@counseling.org

Internet briefing paper:
www.counseling.org/publicpolicy

Capwiz “Contact Congress!” site:
http://capwiz.com/counseling
birthday for the entire school staff, for instance. The counseling staff has also engaged in “Halloween caroling” and joined with the school’s athletic coaches in a broad school spirit effort. The effort carried over into the classroom, she says, and got even disenfranchised students involved. The counselors also had humorous T-shirts made up that they occasionally wore at school. The shirts said: “1) Go to class. 2) Do your work. 3) Listen to your counselor.”

“I refer to myself as the mental health professional at the school, and I see it as my role to keep the whole place feeling healthy and to model good mental health,” Wilson says. “For me, humor is often the best way to do that.”

Jim Paterson is a contributing writer for Counseling Today and a high school counselor living in Olney, Md. Contact him at mypat@radix.net.

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org

What about dual relationships?

When it comes to working with a staff member in the school or the parent of a student (see related article on page 18), school counselors may have concerns about what have previously been known as “dual relationships.”

In the past, counselors were generally advised to avoid counseling relationships where the interests of the client— in this case the student— might be compromised if the counselor began counseling someone with whom the client had a relationship (e.g., a student’s parent or teacher).

Ted Remley, professor of counseling at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., and author of the book Ethical, Legal and Professional Issues in Counseling, says counselors must be careful in circumstances where they are working with a parent or staff member. “The reason counselors should avoid such dual relationships is that it is difficult to be objective when a counselor has another relationship with the client,” he says. “Only the client’s best interests should be the concern of the counselor—not other issues.”

However, near the close of 2005, the American Counseling Association released the first revision of the ACA Code of Ethics in a decade. Completed over a three-year period, the revision of the ethical code features several major updates, including in the area of dual relationships. The 2005 ACA Code of Ethics effectively eliminates the use of the phrase “dual relationships,” which experts on the ACA Ethics Code Revision Task Force said was confusing and imprecise.

ACA Chief Professional Officer David Kaplan says that rather than banning dual relationships, the ethics code now looks at the individual types of potential dual relationships and allows those that are beneficial to the client. He explains that this new approach draws from the work of Rocco Cottone, a member of the ACA Ethics Code Revision Task Force.

Now the ACA Code of Ethics deals with each issue separately and generally allows for what were once called dual relationships as long as the “relationship is beneficial to the client” (see Standard A.5.e., “Role Changes in the Professional Relationship,” and Standard A.7., “Multiple Clients”; the ethics code is available online at www.counseling.org/ethics).

Counselors facing situations in which their role changes are required to document the reasons for such a relationship, as well as the benefits and possible consequences. They are also asked to get the full informed consent of the client. In cases where two persons are being served by the counselor are related— such as with a parent and student—the counselor is required to spell out what the client is and the nature of both relationships. If the counselor is in conflicting roles, he/she must “clarify, adjust or withdraw from roles appropriately” (Standard A.7.).

ACA members may contact Larry Freeman, ACA’s manager of Ethics and Professional Standards, for a free ethics consultation at 800.347.6637 ext. 314 or by e-mailing lfreeman@counseling.org.

—Jim Paterson

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mates to participate in the following process: Make a list of all the things the other person does that grate on your nerves. Then go through each one and decide whether it's a deal-breaker or just an annoyance. Think of it as a matter of degrees. Set aside the little things for now and start with the No. 1 issue.

5. Consider the positives

"We are often attracted to people who are different from us because they represent qualities we wish we possessed," Fee says. "If you're really shy, maybe being around a more outgoing person will force you out of your shell. When one person's strength makes up for the other's weakness, being opposites is an advantage.

She noted that it's also important for students to:

- Be clear of what they're asking for instead of just complaining. Before a problem can be solved, roommates need to agree on what the problem is.
- Actually listen to the other party and paraphrase what that person said to clarify the message. "So, what you are saying is ..." or "I'm not sure I understand. Do you mean ..."
- Stay away from e-communication. Fee says she has actually witnessed roommates arguing via Instant Messenger while sitting only feet away from one another in the same room. "People who hate confrontation love e-mail, IM or write notes," she says. "They are all convenient ways to avoid conversations that really need to be held face-to-face. You can waste a lot of time and emotional energy trying to decode the message behind the message. These are dangerous ways to communicate emotional information because they lack the benefit of nonverbal cues, tone of voice and a chance to clarify in the moment. No happy or sad icon can adequately describe how a person really feels."

Sign on the dotted line

Many colleges require roommates to sign a formal contract. Fee thinks this is good practice and suggests that roommates write up their own contract or at least discuss basic issues. If roommates agree to create a written contract, it should be something they both (or in the case of multiple roommates, all) work on together, she says, rather than a list of personal demands. Some topics to discuss include:

- Room guests
- Personal property
- Cleanliness
- Study/quiet time
- Telephone/mail
- Shared costs
- Smoking/drinking
- Personal space
- Handling disagreements

Once rules or guidelines have been established, students should also consider what the consequences will be for breaking them. Fee says. Roommates might want to consider creating a contract at the beginning of the semester and then renegotiating it after a few weeks of living together and getting to know one another, she says. The contract should be posted in the room, Fee says, and another copy should be given to the RA.

"Being accountable to someone else tends to hold people to their word," she points out. "Students might think it's too much work or that they will be able to deal with problems as they arise, but it's much harder once emotions cloud the issue. Discussing all these issues up front prevents a lot of future hassles."

Parental control

Call it the fallout from "soccer mom syndrome" — more students are entering college without the required life skills to take care of themselves properly or the necessary social skills to thrive in a communal setting.

"Some students have spent so much time studying and fitting in extra-curricular activities that they've never developed necessary social skills," Fee says. "Well-intentioned parents have become overly involved in their kids' lives, planning their time and solving their dilemmas. By the time these kids enter college, they have no confidence in speaking up for themselves." Fee notes she has seen many overprotective parents attempt to step in and demand that their "child" be assigned a new roommate.

Fee offers the following tips to parents:

Offer suggestions, not solutions

Conflict resolution is a skill that needs to be practiced. Fee says. The more parents assume this responsibility for their kids, the longer it will take adolescents and young adults to become confident in who they are and what they value, she says. Fee advises parents to help their kids become critical thinkers by imagining scenarios, brainstorming solutions and considering possible outcomes and consequences.

Prepare your kids for conflict

Conflict is inevitable because people are different. Students who assume that things will be great will be thrown for a loop. Even best friends (who, by the way, Fee strongly discourages from living together) should expect to have differences in needs, living habits, stress levels and communication skills.

"Teach your child that conflict does not have to be negative," she says. "It's an opportunity to be creative and learn how to problem solve."

Follow the chain of command

Parents should encourage students to try to work things out for themselves but also let them know that there are other people on campus who can help them with more serious issues. Resident Life staff will help mediate as long as students have already attempted to solve the problem face-to-face. Campus counseling centers are available if a roommate is exhibiting signs of mental illness, such as depression or substance abuse. "If nothing else, a counseling session can help the student learn to better deal with stress and find other ways to manage the situation," Fee says. "Ultimately, these are the life skills they need to learn to be on track for the real world."

For more information on surviving the roommate from hell, check out Fee's website at www.myroommateisdrivingmescrazy.com.

Angela Kennedy is a senior writer for Counseling Today. Contact her at akennedy@counseling.org.

Letters to the editor: ct@counseling.org

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Faculty Position
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PERCEPTION: Counselors don’t need malpractice insurance, employer-provided coverage protects us.

REALITY: Depending on the case, employer coverage may be limited or provide no protection at all.

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- If your employer disputes the facts of the case, they may not cover you. If your employment is terminated, your coverage is terminated.
- If the alleged incident occurred outside of your official duties or official workday, coverage can be denied.
- If defense and settlement costs exceed the limits of coverage, you could be liable with making up the difference.

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