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# VACC Headlines

Serving the needs of Virginia Clinical Counselors since 1980



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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Penny Norford is the current VACC President. She joined the VACC Executive Board in 2008. Penny maintains a private counseling practice and training consultant business in Charlottesville Virginia.

Last year, Penny started a central Virginia chapter of VACC in Charlottesville. The group meets monthly with a two hour training every other month. Belonging to a regional chapter increases referrals to other LPC's. It provides members with a list serv (which is helpful on a minute to minute basis) provides a source of local continuing education, and it may even reduce ethical violations which increase with isolation. VACC has a chapter in Northern Virginia and is in the midst of resurrecting the Hampton Roads chapter. If you are interested in starting a regional chapter, Penny is willing to provide a two hour ethics training prior to your meeting. Contact her at [pennor4d@aol.com](mailto:pennor4d@aol.com).

Current issues on the national level and state level such as the CMHCP requirements for Tricare referrals and universities requiring all programs to be CACREP accredited are matters before the VACC board.

Counselors interested serving on the VACC Board, which meets quarterly in Richmond, should send an e-mail to Penny at the above address.



## TRICARE and LPC's

By Michael E. Nahl

The new federal rule covering Tri-care Certified Mental Health Counselors went into effect on August 18, 2014. The final rule extended for two more years (until January 1, 2017) the transitional phase for provider certification, which would enable more LPC's to qualify for the independent practice status, while ensuring the providers who wish to can maintain practice under the provision of being supervised by a physician.

Those who are not licensed clinicians who graduated from a qualified CACREP graduate program have until January 1, 2017 to pass the NCMHCE

exam offered through the National Board of Certified Counselors. If you are an LPC who took the NCMHCE exam as part of your licensing process, all you have to do is certify so to Tricare. Those LPC's who took a different form of licensure examination will need to pass this exam in order to be certified as an independent Tricare provider.

The American Mental Health Counselors Association, which is VACC's parent organization, was recognized in the final rule as "the recognized national professional association that sets the standards for the profession." The American Mental Health Counselors Association has done a great deal for LPC's across the nation, and VACC encourages its members to join AMHCA if you have not already.



## VACC Holds Workshop in Virginia Beach

By Michael E. Nahl

VACC held a workshop at the Virginia Beach Public Library on May 23, 2014 that featured presentations on psychopharmacology and countertransference. VACC members paid \$30 for the four hour workshop, as did VACSW (Virginia Association of Clinical Social Workers) and VAMFT (Virginia Association of Marriage and Family Therapists) members, as per our reciprocal arrangement.

Mike Jeffrey led off the workshop with an excellent presentation on clinical psychopharmacology. In the process, he made the point that LPC's are sometimes not considered for federal positions because of the perception that we do not have a grasp of psychopharmacology to the extent that social workers and psychologist do. Mike presented us with several pages of excellent handouts as well.

Penny Norford then spoke on "Attraction and Countertransference." Dr. Norford drew on her extensive experience in supervision to speak about the ethics of transference and countertransference. She also led the group in some experiential exercises.

We had 28 participants in the workshop, which was held in the very comfortable Virginia Beach Public Library auditorium with a coffee bar and restrooms right down the hall. Our evaluations were almost all "5's" on a scale of 1 to 5. VACC looks forward to bringing this workshop to other sections of the state in the near future. Finally, we were pleased to see former VACC board members Cindy and Gary Rafala, Tina Kouzi, and Bill Walters in attendance.

## Plan Now to Avoid ICD-10 Coding Confusion

By Lourie W. Reichenberg, LPC

The new deadline to switch over to ICD-10 coding is now set for **October 1, 2015**.



On April 1, 2014, the deadline was extended by President Obama as part of H.R. 4302 (the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014).

The importance to therapists and other mental health professionals is the extension by one year, of switching over from ICD-9 to ICD-10 codes. (The previous deadline was October, 2014).

So what does this mean for Virginia counselors? All HIPAA-compliant entities should continue to use ICD-9 codes for billing and coding purposes through September 30, 2015. On October 1, 2015 we will be required to begin using the ICD-10 codes. Both sets of codes (ICD-9 and ICD-10) are available online ([www.who.int/classifications/fed/en](http://www.who.int/classifications/fed/en)) and are included in DSM-5. A complete explanation of both classification systems, as well as both sets of codes, are also included in my concise guide: **DSM-5 Essentials: The Savvy Clinician's Guide to Changes in Criteria** (see resources at the end of this article).

### A Little Background

The International Classification of Diseases Clinical Modifications (ICD-CM) is the coding system used in the United States for mental health and other disorders. The code numbers we currently use for billing purposes are ICD-9-CM codes. The extension of the deadline to 2015 gives us an extra year to get ready to switch over to the ICD-10 codes. While the ICD provides code numbers, the amount of diagnostic detail is

limited. On the other hand, DSM-5 provides more specific and detailed diagnostic criteria, but does not include all of the diagnoses that are available through ICD. Mental health counselors should be familiar with both sets of diagnostic systems to provide a complete and accurate diagnosis.

Check with your insurance provider for any additional updates and information affecting your practice. October 1, 2015 will be here before you know it, so use this time to get ready!



### Resources

**International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision (ICD-10)** is available online at [www.who.int/classifications/fed/en](http://www.who.int/classifications/fed/en)

*The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2013) is available from APA \$199

*DSM-5 Essentials: The Savvy Clinician's Guide to Changes in Criteria* (L. W. Reichenberg, 2014). \$25 Available from the publisher (Wiley) or on Amazon.com



## VACC EXECUTIVE BOARD UPDATE

By Michael Nahl

The Virginia Association of Clinical Counselors has been the state chapter of the American Mental Health Counselors Association since 1980. We were also the state clinical counseling division of the Virginia Counselors Association before disaffiliating in 2003. For the last 11 years, VACC has been active in advocacy, lobbying, education, and the dissemination of information through our website and newsletter. We have also been active in working closely with the Virginia Association of Clinical Social Workers and the Virginia Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. We have two active regional chapters, one in Charlottesville and one in Northern Virginia. We also manage to give out fellowships every year, attend Board of Counseling meetings, and send out legislative alerts. More information is available about VACC on the website ([www.VACC.org](http://www.VACC.org)), including our bylaws, our mission statement, our history of past presidents, and various other information.

With the above as a backdrop, we appreciate the loyal cadre of members who join us and renew their memberships. It is certainly challenging for a volunteer organization such as us to manage all of the myriad responsibilities of a state organization. We are therefore seeking not only to expand the Executive Board, but are also in the process of seeking a part-time executive director to manage and perform many of the tasks that busy volunteer board members now strive to perform. We would appreciate hearing from anyone who has an interest in clinical leadership, although we would particularly like to hear from former board members, public sector clinicians, and those with computer skills, research and writing skills, and specialty practices. If you are interested, please send an email to current VACC president Penny Norford ([pennor4d@aol.com](mailto:pennor4d@aol.com)) with your resume or vitae attached. VACC also is interested in renewing chapters in Hampton Roads, Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Roanoke. Let us know if you have an interest in developing a group and one of those areas. We look forward to hearing from you!

### VACC Awards One 2014 Fellowship!

VACC customarily awards two Linda Heacock Memorial Fellowships each year by an essay contest that is judged by VACC board members. (Doctoral and Master's-level counseling students pursuing careers as professional counselors and unlicensed counselors who graduated within the last 18 months are eligible; applicants must be a member of [The Virginia Association of Clinical Counselors](http://www.VACC.org).) However, this year we decided to offer one Fellowship by essay contest, and the other by lottery. Unfortunately, not a single applicant chose to submit an essay, so that Fellowship will not be awarded. To quote Woody Allen, "Eighty percent of success is showing up."

The "lottery" was conducted by one board member having a numbered list of all of the applicants, and the other choosing a number without access to the list. The lucky winner is Gina Polychronopoulos. Congratulations!



## Membership Benefit

By Michael Nahl

VACC would like to feature one or two of our members in each edition of the newsletter. We would like a brief bio, structured as below, and perhaps a picture if you have one. Here's your chance to get some free marketing and exposure among your colleagues.

The first section should include your name, degrees, licenses, and certifications. Describe where you practice and perhaps what specialties you have. Mention your email in this section and, if you have one, your website. If you can, include some information about your association with The Virginia Association of Clinical Counselors.

The second section would include information you care to share about your specialties, your outlook on counseling, your needs and wants (e.g., space to rent, supervision arrangements, referral connections). Perhaps you would like to share something about your professional vision.

The third section might include something about your personal life such as your Zen practice, your mountain climbing, your bowling expertise, etc.

Keep the bio to less than a page. Email your bios to michaelnahl@cox.net. Let's see you in our newsletter!

## Advocacy Update

By Michael Nahl, LPC

## ADVOCACY UPDATE

[Bringing members the latest VACC's advocacy efforts.](#)

VACC recently sent the following e-mail to Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center regarding their apparently discriminatory stance against hiring licensed professional counselors. We have yet to receive a response:

“Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center prides itself on being an equal employment opportunity employer, but discriminates against licensed professional counselors and licensed marriage and family therapists in its employment advertisements. Both the Director of Clinical Services and the Program Coordinator for the Partial Hospital Program positions are advertised as requiring an LCSW. Licensed professional counselors have credentials equal or superior to those of LCSW's. (Licensure for an LPC in Virginia requires 60 graduate semester hours in 13 core areas; 4000 hours of supervised experience; 200 hours of face-to-face supervision.) Many local LPC's admit patients to Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center and would likely be disheartened to find that they are not eligible for employment within the hospital.

We hope that you will review the concerns of the Virginia Association of Clinical Counselors with your marketing director and medical director, and reconsider your employment policies. We look forward to sharing your response with our membership.”