CACREP Information

- **CACREP sets minimum educational preparation standards for the Counseling profession**
  Since 1981, CACREP has been recognized as the premier accrediting organization of the Counseling profession. CACREP holds recognition from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and is a founding member of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA). Its standards were developed and have been maintained by professional counselor educators and practitioners. The standards represent the Counseling profession’s understanding of the minimum knowledge and skill areas required to enter the profession.

- **CACREP is recognized by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**
  In September 2010, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issued qualification standards formally recognizing counselors as mental health specialists within the Veterans Health Administration. Of key interest to CACREP programs is the educational qualification outlined in the regulations, which requires counselors to hold a master’s degree in mental health counseling, or a related field, from a program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Examples of related mental health counseling fields include, but are not limited to, Addiction Counseling; Community Counseling; Gerontology Counseling; Marital, Couple, and Family Counseling; and Marriage and Family Therapy. There are no substitute degrees authorized. The full text of the standards is available online at [http://www1.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=507&FType=2](http://www1.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=507&FType=2).

- **CACREP accreditation is included in Recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) regarding the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors under the TRICARE programs.**
  An independent committee, constituted by the Institute of Medicine at the request of Congress and charged with reviewing the provision of mental health counseling services under TRICARE, recommends (2010) that mental health counselors be able to work independently in TRICARE under the following circumstances:
  - A master’s or higher level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
  - A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher level or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
  - Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Exam.
  - A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

- **CACREP is a cost-effective review process that focuses on continual program improvement**
  CACREP fees are modest in relation to other accrediting agencies and are far lower than daily consultant fees charged by individuals. Costs cover multiple levels of reviews with feedback, including an initial review, an on-site visit, and a final board level review. In addition, the fees charged by CACREP cover any administrative costs of associated with maintaining current information on accredited programs that is made available to the public.

- **Research indicates that CACREP accreditation makes a difference in quality**
  - Published research has shown that graduates of CACREP programs perform significantly better on the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Credentialing (NCE) than do graduates of non CACREP programs (Adams, 2006; Scott, 2003).
  - A research project directed to program directors found that respondents (counselor educators at colleges and universities) perceived that the quality of their applicants improved after attaining CACREP accreditation. Furthermore, it was noted that faculty productivity in terms of being professionally involved (e.g., publishing, presenting) increased with accreditation. The item where respondents noted the largest degree of positive change was in the increased number of employment opportunities for graduates (Brew, 2002).
• **CACREP is a partner in public protection**

As an organization, CACREP believes that excellence in counselor preparation is necessary to insure the health, safety and welfare of the public. Counseling is an allied health profession and appropriate training is critical to client safety.

- Recent research by Mascari (2005) found that ethical violations of licensed counselors in New Jersey appear to be intertwined with problems of professional identity and graduation from graduate degree programs that are not clearly in counseling. An even more recent article by Martin and Cannon (2010, in press) cites that over a period of eight (8) years, only one of eight individuals successfully prosecuted for ethical violations in Tennessee graduated from a CACREP program. The Martin and Cannon article includes many other issues that have arisen from a lack of training in clear professional identity. CACREP advocates for strong professional identity in the Counseling profession and requires its accredited programs to provide a strong foundation built upon the profession's code of ethics and standards of practice.

- Based on accreditation best practices, CACREP has recently transitioned to outcomes-based program standards. Graduates of CACREP accredited programs are assessed upon their ability to demonstrate, at an acceptable level, the knowledge, skill and practice requirements set by the profession.
CACREP Fast Facts

- **CACREP vs. Non-CACREP Programs in the United States**
  Approximately 1000 graduate counseling programs currently exist in the U.S. CACREP accredits just over 62% of all counseling programs in the country.

- **CACREP Programs**
  CACREP accredits a grand total of 622 counseling programs from 273 institutions across the United States.
  - **CACREP Students**
    There are 39,005 students currently enrolled in CACREP programs. Additionally, 36,301 prospective graduate students applied for admission into CACREP programs in the past year.
  - **CACREP Graduates**
    Last year, a total of 10,260 students graduated from CACREP-accredited counseling programs.

- **State Licensure Board Requirements**
  There are currently twenty-six (26) states that specifically identify a master’s degree from a CACREP-accredited program as an option for meeting the education requirement for counseling licensure.

  There are twenty-three (23) states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, which do not specifically identify CACREP as a route to counselor licensure. However, these states outline core educational content/course areas that need to be fulfilled in order to qualify for counselor licensure which are directly related to the eight (8) core curricular areas set forth by CACREP.

- **National Certification for Counselors**
  The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) recognizes CACREP-accredited programs as the standard of excellence in counselor preparation and waives the 3000 required hours of post-graduate counseling experience and 100 required hours of supervision over a 24-month period necessary for national counselor certification for students who graduated from a CACREP accredited program.

- **CACREP Research**
  - Graduates of CACREP programs perform significantly better on the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Credentialing (NCE) than do graduates of non CACREP programs (Adams, 2006).
  - Graduate students from CACREP programs passed the NCE at higher rates (86%) than did students from non-CACREP programs (77%) (Milsom & Akos, 2007).
  - Recent research using a national sample has shown that 81.7% of Licensed Professional Counselors sanctioned for ethics violations graduated from non-CACREP-accredited programs (Even, 2011; Even & Robinson, in press, *Journal of Counseling & Development*)—see “Research Spotlight” handout for more details.
Research Spotlight:
LPC Ethical Violations, CACREP vs. Non-CACREP Graduates

by Dr. Trigg Even

For this study, archived data on the type of ethics or licensure violation and sanction(s) were secured from state licensing boards and publicly accessible databases. A national sample of fully-licensed professional counselors (LPC or equivalent) represented all US geographic regions and approximately two-thirds of all state licensing boards. Data were collected from state licensing boards dating as far back as board inception, a span in some cases of 30 or more years.

Demographically, the counselors represented in the final sample for this study had an average of 7.5 years of fully-licensed professional service. Nineteen percent of counselors in this study completed a doctorate in counseling or a closely-related field, and all received ethics training as part of their curriculum requirements. The most common violations were related to competence and impairment, boundary violations, professional practices, billing, and breaches of confidentiality, in that order.

More than 8 out of 10 counselors in this sample who were sanctioned by state licensing boards graduated from non-CACREP-accredited counselor education programs. In addition, the accreditation factor—specifically, having graduated from a non-CACREP-accredited program—was found to be a significant and important predictor of ethical misconduct frequencies. These findings provide empirical support for the CACREP standards. Licensed professional counselors who graduated from CACREP-accredited counselor education programs committed ethical misconduct significantly less frequently than those who graduated from non-CACREP-accredited programs.

Sanctions for Ethical Misconduct