

**Midterm: State Licensure Response Paper**

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Mental Health Practitioners are monitored by the New York State Education Department for their effectiveness and moral integrity. Mental health counselors must meet numerous educational and experience standards established by New York State before being granted license. The Board of Regents enforces a set of guidelines, laws, and norms to guarantee a license applicant's competence and moral integrity. Many organizations, including the American Counseling Association and its divisions, offer their members tools, training, workshops, and conferences to help them develop their abilities and strategic thinking as they pursue careers as licensed counselors.

Licensed Mental Health Counselors implement effective methods of counseling and psychotherapy to treat individuals with various mental disorders and ailments. These professionals are concerned with the optimal functioning of individuals, families, and organizations (Office of the professions, 2022). Mental health counselors not only utilize standard mental health assessment and evaluation protocols, but they also dive into the patient's psychosocial history, conjure up treatment plans, track patient progress, facilitate consultation and referrals to other mental health practitioners and develop plans for their clients with the end goal resulting in their discharge. Upon careful evaluation of the mental health concerns and associated human developmental conflicts that arise, professionals devise a plan to treat these issues and discover methods and strategies for coping and overcoming challenges.

Mental Health Counselors use brief techniques such as crisis intervention and solution-focused approaches, as well as longer term approaches when treating chronic mental health disorders or disabilities. Within the protected scope of practice, Mental Health Counselors work with their clients to identify goals and solutions to the emotional problems they are facing.

Counselors implement psychotherapy for the treatment of mental disorders and individuals struggling with substance abuse. Mental health Counselors may evaluate and assess a client's disability and develop a treatment plan that consists of the client obtaining counseling services, job training and access to technology as well as other services. Taking these measures ensures the patient reaches maximum inclusion in both work and social settings. Mental Health Professionals aid in the supervision of counseling interns and graduates of counseling programs; they help them develop the necessary skills needed to become effective Mental Health Counselors. MHCs become involved in program development, advocacy, research and program evaluation in an attempt to improve mental health treatment and prevention services (O.P., 2022). Mental health counselors help new and displaced employees seek vocational and career interests by evaluating their knowledge and identifying their skills and abilities. They also work within the school system and help to identify the areas that prohibit the learning of a student within the school system. They typically collaborate with the student, teachers, and families throughout the educational career of that student to ensure that they obtain skills necessary to maintain healthy and successful lives.

As of January 1st, 2017, Licensed Mental Health Counselors are to complete 36 hours of approved continuing education courses for each triennial registration period, with the consideration of no more than 12 hours of continuing education activities in any given three-year period. This also includes self-help study programs from the New York State education department approved providers (OP, 2016). Counselors must have a master's degree or higher in counseling or its equivalent. They must also acquire coursework in counseling theory and practice, assessment, psychopathology, ethical practice and a supervised internship. Under New York State, MHCs must pass the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Examination (NCMHCE) administered by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). The

completion of at least 3,000 hours of post-degree supervised clinical experience by a qualified Licensed Mental Health Professional at a specific site is also required.

The state of New York does not have a clear-cut definition of what it means to be of good moral character. Sub part 28-1 in accordance with the laws rules and regulations under the Board of Regents state that the determination of whether an individual seeking authorization to practice is in accordance with the procedures addressed in this subpart. Some of these procedures include the collection of information and determining whether said applicant has convicted a crime or has been a part of a situation in which their moral character was in question. The Office of Professional Discipline should be allowed a full investigation should any criminal act or question of applicants' moral character come into question. The individual's application must then be reviewed and granted a majority vote by the state panel. If the applicant's moral character is in question by any majority vote, then said applicant can request a hearing followed by an appeal. No matter the decision of an appeal, the applicant reserves the right to reapply for licensure and may be asked by the Committee on the Professions to take a proficiency exam and obtain satisfactory scores to gain licensure (OP, 2013).

To become a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, an individual must take the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Examination (NCMHCE) in New York State. An individual can sit for the exam once they have completed and met all education requirements of a master's degree or higher or its equivalent, have met all experience requirements of 3,000 hours of supervised work, as well as the passing of the state exam. This individual must also be of good moral character and be at least 21 years old. They must have also completed coursework or training pertaining to identifying and reporting child abuse offered by a New York State approved provider. The NCMHCE Exam consists of 11 case studies in which candidates will have approximately 225 minutes to complete. Each case study consists of one narrative and 9-15 multiple choice questions. Each case study will be broken down into three sections: initial

intake summary and two counseling sessions. The sections will begin with the narrative along with a set of multiple-choice questions. The exam will cover 6 domains pertaining to professional practice and ethics, intake, assessment and diagnosis, areas of clinical focus, treatment planning, counseling skills and interventions, and care counseling attributes. The test form will contain 130 to 150 items of which 100 of those items will be scored. Candidates are only allowed to complete the application for a limited permit under the supervision of the specific site they are working at, when they have completed all educational requirements and have 3,000 hours of supervised work accumulated as well as the passing of the state exam.

The American Counseling Association is deemed one of the largest counseling associations to date, with origins being traced back to the 1913 founding of the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) (Neukrug, p. 11). The ACA serves the needs of all types of counselors concerning their professional development, advocacy, as well as the ethical and culturally inclusive practices that protect those utilizing counseling services. The ACA has 18 divisions, with 55 chartered branches that include the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Philippines and Europe. Four of those regions support counselors throughout the United states(the North Atlantic region, western region, Midwest region, and southern region). The ACA includes a vast array of opportunities and benefits for its members. Some of these benefits include subscriptions to the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *The Monthly Magazine*, *Counseling Today* and other professional journals based on division and membership. Benefits also include access to conferences, online courses, book discounts, counseling resources, including books, ethical codes, liability insurance, networking and mentoring opportunities, graduate student scholarships and so much more. The ACA offers annual membership with fees ranging from \$105 to \$189. Subscriptions for members depend on personal need as it pertains to their academic and professional journeys. This year, the ACA is hosting their virtual conference experience from October 17th to the 21st. This event is open for

licensed professional counselors, students, and mental health professionals. This conference is a means for members and students to learn, engage, and gain insight on the more up-to-date strategies and technologies implemented in professional counseling. Within the ACA, there are several divisions. Divisions of interest for me would be the Association for Spiritual Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC), and the Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling (ACAC). My desire is to incorporate the spiritual, ethical and religious values taught by ASERVIC and combine those teachings with the training and professional growth development techniques taught by ACAC to ensure my efficacy and good nature as a counselor as I'm working with children and adolescents.

The American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) is ACAs 13th division founded in 1978. The AMHCA was established with the intended purpose of being a home base for counselors providing services to agencies and community based settings (Neukrug, p. 14). The organization's main objective is to advance the collaboration, advocacy, research, ethical practice and education, training and professional development across the board for counselors. AMHCA hosts annual conferences for members. Membership allows access to various education and advocacy workshops, conferences and information, as well as access to several AMHCA publication journals like the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* and *The Advocate Magazine*. Discounts to health services, website platforms, directory services and so much more are granted to members.

The American Association of Christian Counselors is deemed the world's largest faith-based Mental Health Organizations. The primary mission of AACC is to assist and equip Christian counselors, licensed professionals, pastors and lay church members with biblical truth and psychosocial knowledge to help minister unto individuals that have endured hurt and trauma (American Association of Christian Counselors, 2022). The goal would be to move these individuals toward personal wholeness, interpersonal competence, mental stability and spiritual

maturity. Membership to join the AACC range from \$54 to \$129 yearly With some subscriptions allowing access to insurance. Along with AACCs membership, there are about 8 divisions which include the division for Biblical Counseling and The Society for Christian Psychology along with many others. AACC holds their own code of ethics as well as credentialing and becoming a board-certified counselor, life coach, crisis responder or mental health coach through the international board of Christian care The ACC also provides counseling services and access to monthly webinars taught by worldly experts in the mental health profession as well as resources like self help guide books. The AACC also hosts live national, world and monthly conferences.

The New York State education department ensures the efficacy and good moral character of mental health professionals as they prepare for state licensure. Prior to receiving licensure, Mental health counselors must fulfill various educational and experience requirements set by the New York State. There are a set of rules, laws and regulations reinforced by the Board of Regents to ensure the good moral character and competency of a candidate seeking licensing. Various organizations such as the American Counseling Association along with its divisions provide members with tools, training, workshops and conferences to enhance their skills and strategic approaches as they go about their professional journeys as a licensed counselor.

## References

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