

# Identification as an Addiction Professional Matters

By Jerry Jenkins, MEd, MAC, NCC AP Chair

Have you ever thought about how you identify yourself and how you like for others to identify themselves to you in the addiction profession?

During my Army basic training I was taught to identify rank and follow that by the last name. That information was quickly available simply by looking at the chevron of enlisted personnel or collar for rank of officers and name tag of someone in uniform. I could also see other information such as if they were a paratrooper (those who jump out of perfectly good aircraft), were Special Forces, or had been an Infantryman with a Combat tour. All of that information was displayed on any uniform a soldier wore.

As addiction professionals, we usually use letters after our names to indicate our educational level and professional credentials. If you have read my previous columns, I have a constant theme that addiction professionals need to have readily identifiable credentials. I consider the NCAC I, NCAC II, and MAC the most consistent and identifiable credentials because National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP) credentials are nationally and internationally recognized, and are the same in Alabama as they are Wyoming or any other state, territory or international country that uses our credentials. Those letters indicate at a glance that you have met a state as well as a national standard and have agreed to follow an ethical standard established by the profession.

NCC AP focuses on keeping its standards high in order to increase our credibility as professionals who strive to deliver the most effective substance use disorder treatment available and do so in an ethical manner. NCC AP currently is undergoing an update on all our basic tests (NCAC I, NCAC II, and MAC), and the test for the National Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (NCPRSS) credential in order to maintain those high standards and continue to build on the verification of knowledge and competency of addiction counselors globally. NCC AP Commissioners and other subject matter experts review the current test questions for relevancy, current research, and current practices and submit the revisions along with references for each test question to our testing company. At that point, the testing company psychometricians review each of the questions, analyze the wording and sentence structure, and recommend any changes. NCC AP Commissioners and/or clinical staff review those recommendations for final approval before adding to the “test question pool.”

From there, a “job analysis” is conducted to determine the scope of the practice and knowledge level required for each level of practice and the results are used to develop the test blueprint (including test specifications, test content outline). The test blueprint ensures that topic areas are weighted



according to their importance (i.e., how often a knowledge and/or skill is used or the potential consequence for not applying a knowledge and/or skill properly) to practice as a certified professional at each level. The test blueprint defines the structure and format of the exam in terms of the percentage of exam items allocated to each topic area, knowledge and skills measured in each topic area, and types of items to be included.

Once this process is complete, NCC AP will be announcing a call for currently NCC AP-certified professionals to participate in beta testing of the new test formats for NCAC I, NCAC II and MAC. The purpose of beta testing is to collect enough response data on each test question (item) to statistically analyze its performance and determine whether it should be retained, discarded, or revised and beta tested again. In addition, in between the above larger steps are smaller technical steps related to technical accuracy, scoring accuracy, clarity, importance to practice, the plausibility of incorrect options (i.e.,

distractors), and how a cut score (i.e., passing score) is determined. Needless to say, this is a time intensive and detailed process to ensure NCC AP’s national credentials continually reflect the profession’s highest standards.

Remember the earlier question: “Have you ever thought about how you identify yourself and how you like for others to identify themselves to you?” I hope you use your NCAC I, NCAC II or MAC professional designation if you have the credential. If you don’t have one, please consider getting one as they are the most

consistent and identifiable way of showing your professionalism and ethics at a glance. For more information, see [www.naadac.org/types-eligibility](http://www.naadac.org/types-eligibility).



**(References)**

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. (2016). NAADAC/NCC AP Code of Ethics (2016). Available at <https://www.naadac.org/code-of-ethics>. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2011). Scopes of Practice & Career Ladder for Substance Use Disorder Counseling. Available at <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/PEP11-SCOPE/PEP11-SCOPE.pdf>.



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