

NCC AP at Home and Around the World

By James “Kansas” Cafferty, LMFT, MAC, NCAAC, NCC AP Chair

It is no secret that today, the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP) is a significant arm of NAADAC, and responsible for credentialing tens of thousands of addiction professionals across the country. When NCC AP began in 1989, it was formed to credential counselors to treat both alcohol use disorder and drug use disorders under the same credentialing. Out of that development came to be what we now know as the National Certified Addiction Counselor (NCAC) Level I and Level II. Soon thereafter, in 1994, in cooperation with the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselors Certification (CRCC) came the Master Addiction Counselor (MAC) credential. This completed the core suite of credentials that saw the careers of counselors as evolving, growing, and developing into masters of their professions.

Since the beginning, it has been a primary part of NCC AP’s mission to achieve national credentials for our field. It really is to the benefit of our entire profession to find our way there, and we are still working diligently toward the day when payors recognize our credentials as equal and appropriate for reimbursement regardless of which state they are in. We are working hard for the day to come when a counselor who is relocating has to do nothing more than let their new jurisdiction know they are setting up shop and file “transfer paperwork.” Are addiction professionals really studying something better or more evidence-based in one state than another? With varying degrees of certainty, we can say it is unlikely as we all draw our professional tools from the same research. If by some chance there is a discrepancy in the training, the exams work to bring forward the qualified professionals and to send the clear message to those who are not ready that they simply have some more work to do.

Our primary focus remains on national credentialing, and over the years we have grown, and our exams are now being used multi-nationally and in multiple languages. While this was not necessarily the original mission NCC AP set out on, it is a challenge we have excitedly embraced.

Going back to 2005, NCC AP Commissioners and NAADAC staff and leadership have been working internationally as trainers and consultants in many foreign countries. Often, we were helping them to create their own infrastructure to start the actual field of addiction counseling in their home countries. If you have been to one of the NAADAC Annual Conferences, you may have noticed as you wandered the halls and attended sessions that there is always an international presence. It is not uncommon to find yourself at lunch with some of my longest standing friends in NAADAC, the “Icelandic Contingency” as I like to call them. Not only have they become my dear friends, they are our colleagues and they are studying what we study here—and passing the same tests we are here! Notably, our NCAC I, II, and MAC have been slightly adapted for the International community. If you are abroad, it would be unfair to be asked to answer a question about HIPAA.

In addition to the aforementioned Icelandic counselors, NCC AP and NAADAC have also made significant contributions to several other countries and territories, such as Cyprus, Kenya, Egypt, South Korea, Hong Kong, and several of the American Territories such as the Pacific Jurisdiction and Puerto Rico. In fact, our presence is currently growing



considerably as we have formed a deepened relationship with the Global Credentialing and Certification Commission (GCCC), the counseling credentialing arm of the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP). These groups get a substantial amount of their funding from the U.S. State Department and have created significant documents to further the field of substance use disorder treatment internationally including the Universal Treatment Curriculum and the Universal Prevention Curriculum. These two highly impressive pieces of work are available and used in countries all over the world and are freely accessible to those of us in the United States, including through the ISSUP website.

In fact, NCC AP materials were scrutinized and meticulously reviewed and cross referenced methodically by the GCCC and others, and what has eventually transpired is truly humbling for NCC AP. The meeting of the minds led down a path where our exams have actually been adopted for use by the GCCC! NCC AP, having such a well-developed infrastructure and depth and breadth of testing administration and experience was the perfect fit for an organization that is concerned with finding a way to get people trained and tested even in third world countries. If you take an exam today in Kenya for example, it will be an NCC AP exam.

There is so much happening in the world of substance use disorder counseling and NCC AP is at the forefront, leading the way arm-in-arm with the other vital leaders in our profession. Whether it is finding a way to get our exams translated into Arabic with our friends in Egypt, which is complete now, or setting up a proctoring site in American Samoa, you will find NCC AP is serving all of you as proudly as we can. If you feel compelled to be part of something like this, feel free to contact us. There is plenty of work to go around and we need all of you, at all career levels, to do what is right.



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