

Announcing a New Needed Step on the Career Ladder: The Nationally Certified Addiction Counselor – Associate Level (NCAC-A)

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

The National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP) is excited to announce the launch of the Nationally Certified Addiction Counselor – Associate Level (NCAC-A), a new national credential to add a crucial and missing step on the career ladder. People coming into the addiction workforce from a variety of backgrounds are finding it increasingly difficult, due to a variety of factors outside of their control, to get placements and employment needed to accrue the required clinically supervised experiential hours for their state licenses/credentials and national credentials. With an addiction workforce shortage in the United States, NCC AP saw the need to create a step on the career ladder that would allow people to evidence their education and training to enhance their employability and opportunities to continue on their path to become licensed/credentialed addiction professionals.

The NCAC-A national credential certifies that a person has taken a minimum of 270 hours of addiction-specific education, including six hours of ethics training and six hours of HIV/Bloodborne Pathogens training, has passed the rigorous National Certified Addiction Counselor Level I (NCAC I) examination, and is bound by the NAADAC/NCC AP Code of Ethics. The intention is that by gaining a NCAC-A national credential and evidencing the required education, knowledge, and ethical standards for a NCAC I national credential, an emerging addiction professional will have an easier time gaining employment to accrue the 6,000 hours of supervised experience as an SUD/Addiction Counselor required to achieve the NCAC I. The new credential will also benefit treatment providers by increasing the quality of the new professionals they hire and allocate limited clinical supervision hours to.

The scope of practice of the NCAC-A will mirror that of the NCAC I, but with specific supervision requirements, including an ongoing and documented relationship with a fully credentialed supervisor. The NCAC-A credentialed counselor will not be able to operate autonomously, but may perform the normal duties of a counselor within the same treatment settings as an NCAC I. More information on the specific details of the supervision requirements will be forthcoming from NCC AP in advance of the credential becoming available to qualified individuals.

This new credential is supported by NAADAC’s advocacy efforts with insurance companies to expand acceptance of NCC AP’s national credentials, with Medicaid to add this new level to the scopes of practice for reimbursement, including for 1115 Waiver programs, and with Congress to better explain the role of addiction counselors in the continuum of care and the need for increased funding for education, reimbursements, tuition assistance and more.

NCC AP is very excited about the implications of this new credential, which will be launched in January 2021, and to continue the tradition in this profession of placing a great value on training and experience. We



believe that with the added emphasis on a supervised experience that this credential carries, we have furthered its value and added to the strength of the profession.

Commissioner Recruitment

Have you ever considered serving the profession at the level of a thought leader? Serving on the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals could be an avenue you might want to consider exploring. We are actively recruiting new Commissioners at this time. In an effort to represent various regions and various levels of credentialing, we are currently especially interested in those who carry a National Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist credential and Nationally Certified Addiction Counselor Level II, but we are not exclusively interested in these credential holders. If you have the heart and passion to serve, and believe you meet the qualifications to serve, we are interested in hearing from you! Please explore our application [here](#) to explore a new lens on your camera as you continue your work to heal the world from substance use disorder.



James “Kansas” Cafferty, LMFT, MAC, NCAAC, serves as the Chair to the National Certification for Addiction Professionals. He has been in the field of substance use disorder treatment since 1997, a year after he entered into recovery himself. He currently serves as the Clinical Director at the Aton Center, a residential treatment center based in the suburbs of San Diego, CA. He has been an active member of NAADAC for 15 years.