PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND ASSOCIATE COUNSELORS ON PREPAREDNESS FOR SUBSTANCE USE COUNSELING

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Objectives

- The participant will demonstrate an understanding on perceptions of preparedness of substance use counselors in training.

- The participant will exhibit knowledge on the standards of substance use counselors in a graduate counseling program.

- The participant will display insight into the implications of adequate preparedness of substance use counselors both for graduate counselor programs and clients receiving substance use treatment.
Adequate preparedness for counselors in training for substance use counseling is pivotal

SAMHSA’s substance use counseling competencies include: understanding addiction, treatment knowledge, application to practice, professional readiness

NAADAC states that individuals must possess a certain level of education, experience, & supervision of skills and knowledge related to substance use counseling, prevention, & intervention

CACREP addiction standards for counseling preparation programs
Literature Review

- SAMHSA indicates that colleges are increasingly undertaking the training and preparation of substance use counselors despite it being historically more common outside of the college system
  - With colleges becoming more involved in this training it is important to understand the effectiveness of the counselor education program in preparation of counselors who specialize in substance use treatment.

- Salyers, Ritchie, Cochrane, & Roseman (2006) provide an excellent summary of the need for and inclusion of substance use training in programs accredited by CACREP:
  - The authors noted that it is unclear if counselors are being adequately prepared in their training. In their study, they found training was needed because of higher numbers of students in practicum and internship within CACREP counseling programs.

- Counselors indicate the need for specialized training in substance use counseling within graduate counseling coursework (Iarussi, Perjessy, & Reed, 2013)
  - These authors found that majority of respondents (program directors) reported their programs currently satisfying the CACREP addiction specific standards, meaning that this content is currently being taught in required course work.
Kerwin, M.E., Walker-Smith, K., Kirby, K.C. (2006) reports that there is no empirical data suggesting one of the models of training (graduate school, certifications outside of university settings, etc.) are superior than the other

- Differences in training may have implications for professional development, clinical practice, dissemination of research findings to practice, and management within service delivery models
- These authors found through their data that most substance use counselors are not formally trained in the diagnostic criteria for a mental health diagnosis
- Mental health regulations do not require training in drug and alcohol problems
  - Only 9 states require mental health counselors to have a drug/alcohol course (2006)

Excluding substance use counselors, professional counselors, have the highest proportion of clients with a primary substance use diagnosis when compared with social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists (Harwood, Kowalski, & Ameen, 2004)

- Chandler, Balkin, & Perepiczka (2011) found that only 18% of licensed counselors were exposed to substance use education in required courses
  - 82% of these surveyed counselors took elective courses
Also important, understanding perceived preparedness of students entering the counseling profession.

- Because of inadequate training standards, counselors were often unwilling to identify, treat, or refer persons with substance use issues (Iarussi et al., 2013)

Not only important for substance use counselors to be adequately prepared, those seeking full time work in this area, but it is also vital for all counselors to be knowledgeable and effective at treating substance use both as a co-occurring disorder and as the primary disorder despite their chosen specialty

- Due to the prevalence of these concerns, faculty and students proposed substance use education as necessary for counseling students (Lee, 2011; Madson, Bethea & Necaise, 2008; Morgan, Toloczko, & Comly, 1997).

- Despite this call for education, researchers have suggested the adequate training has not been provided (Dawes-Diaz, 2007; Washton & Zweben, 2006).
What is the Point?

- **Purpose:**
  - This research will identify participant’s perceptions of their preparedness in providing substance use counseling & determining perceptions of effectiveness with counseling specific to substance use.
  - This study will allow us to better understand how students and post-masters professionals (e.g., associate counselors) perceive their preparation and effectiveness with substance use counseling.
  - The outcome of the study could contribute to the existing research literature in the area of counselor preparedness as well as assist in developing training in counselor education programs in an effort to increase preparedness amongst students.
Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of preparedness among post-master associate licensed counselors with issues specific to substance use counseling?

2. What are the perceptions of preparedness among counselor’s in training with issues specific to substance use counseling?

3. Do counselors in training and associate counselors feel adequately prepared to provide substance use counseling?
Methodology - Participants

- Recruited utilizing: List Serves, State Licensure Boards,
- Sought by disseminating an email to graduate counseling program’s faculty to distribute to students
  - The CACREP website lists programs previously accredited, currently accredited, and in process of accreditation
  - Each program with a clinical mental health counseling track was then found via the university website (link on the CACREP website). The program coordinator or other faculty within the counseling program was then contacted via email requesting assistance with distributing survey request.
- Counselors in Training (students in practicum or internship)
- Associate Counselors
- 19 years of age or older
Methodology - Survey

- Survey
  - Web-Based (Qualtrics) survey
  - Anonymous
  - Developed from a pre-existing survey developed by Dr. Brian Shaw from the University of Florida with permission, and modified in order to address the needs of our study.
  - Estimated time to take: 20 minutes.
  - Data is collected electronically and entered and organized into SPSS software for statistical analysis
Methodology - Data

- Variables
  - Demographic variables (gender, CACREP program, license held or not, counselor in training or licensed, substance use certification type if held, and number of years in the field.
  - Variables studied include: perception of preparedness for counselors in training and licensed counselors to work with clients with substance use concerns as it relates to relational difficulties, financial impacts, legal matters, substance use or compulsive behaviors, suicidality as it relates to substance use, academic/learning impacts, mood issues, stress/anxiety, psychotropic medications, risk of harm to others, career related issues, trauma, special populations, and providing education.
  - Specifically the study/survey will assess if counselors in training and associate counselors feel prepared to provide individual, group, couples/family, consultation, referrals, assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, theory, crisis intervention, utilizing research, and ethics/legal concerns.

- Data Analysis
Findings

Research Question

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How it was answered
Implications of the Data

Implications to Counselors

• Legal and Ethical Considerations

Implications to Students

Implications to Counselor Education Programs

Implication to Clients

Implications to Supervision
Limitations and Discussion

- Limitations of the Current study

- Discussion of Findings and Implications

- Questions
References

- Addiction Counseling Competencies: The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of professional practice Technical Assistance Publication (TAP) Series 21 http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA12-4177/21a.htm

- The Association for Addiction Professionals http://www.naadac.org/whatisanaddictionprofessional


