

A communication periodical for our clients, staff & the community at large

The Chronicle

A Paterson Counseling Center Newsletter

Special points of interest:

- PCC has three decades in the field of recovery management
- Counselors are certified and trained in treatment planning and client assessment
- There are custom programs and resources available at PCC for clients in need
- PCC is a 3 year CARF accredited facility meeting the highest of standards for service and care.

Becoming a Substance Abuse Counselor

Substance abuse counseling is one of the most challenging careers within the social service field. Excessive drug and alcohol use often leads a person into a debilitating way of life that can cause mental, emotional and psychological impairment. The counselor is the one who puts this person back together again. Those who work with community agencies, function as part of team in an effort to get the substance abuser back on her feet.

Counselors make referrals to doctors, food banks, housing agencies and any other needed community resource throughout the treatment process. The substance abuse counselor will have one-on-one sessions, as well as group meetings with their clients.

These sessions provide clients a learning environment where they "relearn" how to communicate, and express their emotions in constructive ways. Oftentimes, counselors will work with dual-diagnosed clients dealing with mental illness on top of their substance abuse issues.



Significance

It's not uncommon for substance abuse counselors to be former addicts themselves. Someone who has experienced the dependency issues that drug use creates and perpetuates has the exact perspective needed to deal with a substance abuser's behaviors.

Clients who have the opportunity to work with a counselor who's "been in their shoes" have a real life example of their own possible future. The counselor represents a reality-based rendition of hope, which is something drugs cannot do.

Risk Factors

Substance abuse, in and of itself, is a powerful addiction that doesn't go away without a fight. Relapse rates are high among users, and demand a remarkable depth of patience, and compassion on the part of the counselor. Consequently, burnout is a common occurrence in this occupation. Crisis intervention calls are a regular part of a counselor's workweek. The circumstances he may find his client in after a relapse can be anything from a domestic violence scene to the death of the client. With the many varied tasks required throughout the workday, substance

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Counselor (continued)

abuse counselors do well to have a strong support network at hand for their own well being.

Effects

The role a substance abuse counselor plays in everyday lives provides a tremendous contribution to a community's well being. Addictive behaviors can be passed down the next generation just as easily as blond hair and brown eyes. Environmental conditioning plays a substantial role in shaping how the substance abuser interacts with the world. Close to 20% of prisoners serving time report to have committed their crimes for the purpose of obtaining money for drugs. Which is to say that every recovered addict represents one less potential crime statistic.

NJ State Requirements For Achieving Certification

An applicant for certification shall submit evidence of the following to the Committee:

1. A completed application form, which contains information concerning the applicant's educational and experiential background.
2. A bachelor's degree, associate's degree, high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency.
3. Completion of 270 hours of domain-specific core training approved by the APCBNJ or a regionally accredited college or university which shall be related to the knowledge and skill associated with the functions of an alcohol and drug counselor. (See page 15 of the LCADC/CADC application).
4. 3,000 hours of related experience (one year of full-time work = 1,500 hours). Experiential hours may go back only 5 years.
5. 300 of these hours must be supervised practical training (see pages 9-10 of the application). Supervised practical training must be obtained within three years immediately preceding the submission of the application and shall be distributed among all 12 core functions: screening, intake, orientation, assessment, treatment planning, counseling – individual, group, and family, case management, crisis intervention, client education, referral, consultation, and recordkeeping.
6. A supervisor evaluation form must be submitted on your behalf (see pages 11-13 of the application). If you received your experience or supervised practical training at more than one location, obtain a supervisor evaluation from each location where you worked.
7. Attendance at 30 alcohol and drug self-help meetings. The minimum number of meetings required are 5 AA, 5 Alanon, 5 NA, and any other 15 self-help groups. (See page 14 of the application.)
8. Successful completion of a written exam developed and prepared by the ICRC, or its affiliate. In order to sit for the examination, approval of your application must be granted by the Alcohol and Drug Counselor Committee.
9. Submit a case presentation. Case presentation information is available on the APCBNJ website, www.certbd.com. Click on "Applications and Forms" and then on click on "Testing Forms." Slide down to the "Core Functions and Global Criteria" and "Directions for Preparing a Case Presentation documents."
10. Successful completion of an oral exam based on your approved case presentation.