

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HEALTH REGULATION AND LICENSING ADMINISTRATION**

BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING
AUTHORITY FOR GUIDANCE

July 9, 2021
DATE OF POLICY

21-002
POLICY NO.

POLICY STATEMENT

**SUSPENSION OF FACE-TO-FACE CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENT
DURING THE COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY
FOR CERTIFIED ADDICTION COUNSELORS**

EXTENSION

In light of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Board of Professional Counseling (Board) adopted, on June 12, 2020, the following policy and offered this guidance related to the continuing education (CE) required to maintain certification as addiction counselors in the District. The policy, No. 20-002, was in effect during the calendar year 2020 and expired on December 31, 2020. This policy statement is now issued to extend the guidance.

Section 8708.2 of Title 17 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) requires that, to qualify for the licensure renewal, a certified addiction counselor (CAC) must complete forty (40) hours of CE related to addiction counseling practice during the two (2) years of the licensure term. Additionally, no more than six (6) of the forty (40) hours may be obtained online. 17 DCMR § 8708.3. Further, of the required forty (40) hours, six (6) must be in ethics and three (3) must be in trauma counseling and both must be earned in a face-to-face classroom setting. 17 DCMR § 8708.4.

On March 11, 2020, the Mayor declared the state of public health emergency in the District due to the threat of COVID-19 pandemic. Mayor's Order 2020-045. Following this declaration, Mayor Muriel Bowser issued an order prohibiting mass gatherings of fifty (50) or more persons on March 16, 2020. Mayor's Order 2020-048. On March 24, 2020, non-essential businesses were ordered closed. Mayor's Order 2020-053. A stay-at-home order was issued on March 30, 2020, prohibiting District residents from leaving their home except for certain specified essential businesses. Mayor's Order 2020-054. Similar measures were also adopted in all U.S. states and territories.

As a result of these emergency restrictions, it was clear that licensees would face the impossibility or at least difficulty in obtaining live, in-person CE. The Board therefore voted to suspend the live, in-person, face-to-face requirements of 17 DCMR §§ 8708.3 and 8708.4,

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effective during the current licensure term from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2020.

Accordingly, CACs may fulfill their CE requirement with CE programs or activities obtained via remote methods, distance learning, or home studies, including pre-recorded online presentations. While the implication of this guidance may be obvious, the Board nevertheless also advises licensees that live, in-person educational programs completed before, during, or after the public health emergency declaration will also be accepted.

Further, licensees are advised that all other CE requirements continue to be effective, such as the required six (6) hours of ethics and three (3) hours of trauma counseling. Additionally, this policy guidance applies to all CACs, whether CAC I or CAC II.

COVID-19 public health emergency continued until the date of this policy. Additionally, the Board has begun the process of reviewing Chapter 87, governing CAC, and intends to modify the CE requirements, particularly the requirement for face-to-face CE delivery. Accordingly, the Board now extends the policy described above until such time as the regulatory amendment becomes effective. The regulatory amendments will be published in the *D.C. Register* and posted on the Board's webpage. Additional alerts may also be disseminated via e-mail to current licensees.

All inquiries pertaining to the practice of addiction counseling, including the CE requirements, may be directed to the Board's Health Licensing Specialist, Mr. David Walker, at 202-727-1611 or dcbopec@dc.gov.