



Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation
Federation Canadienne D'agrément des Conseillers en Toxicomanie



COMMENTARY November 2011

Current Realities in the Substance Assessment and Treatment Industry

The Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation (CACCF) is pleased to announce the new credential in relation to the Registered-Substance Abuse Expert (RSAE) Program. The RSAE Program provides Organizations, Employees, Safety-Sensitive Industries, and Communities, the peace of mind of knowing that competence and quality are paramount when addressing Substance Use Issues.

The newest set of credentials are intended to provide organizations and industry a qualified standard for all clinicians' working within safety-sensitive environments where SAE activities are occurring (clinical assessments, treatment of substance use issues, and drug-testing recommendations). **Currently, there are NO standards and NO regulations in place** and unfortunately many clinicians' working within this area are either undertrained and/or unqualified to be conducting assessments and/or providing ongoing care. **Current assessment and treatment services are potentially not valid, reliable or legally defensible without the credentials of a recognized expert.** This newest set of credentials will now provide the SAE Industry a qualified environment.

Questions to Consider when Selecting an SAE Provider---

Many organizations are beginning to ask, "Who is qualified to be conducting work in this critical area"? The answer to this question can be complex. The vast majority of EFAP and other Providers are often not trained to an "expert level" in Substance Disorders and thus many are not qualified to be conducting this type of work. Providers typically use the terms C-SAE and C-SAP; neither of these terms are from an external professional licensing body---they were developed internally by the provider and thus the provider is the only one qualifying the expertise.

If a clinician were qualified to hold a certification showing an expertise in Substance Disorders they would obtain this credential from the CACCF. For those individuals that are Psychologists' and Clinical Social Workers, this alone does not qualify them to be experts in the Substance Disorders area either. In Canada, the respective provincial College of Psychologists and the provincial Association of Social Workers performs a meaningful and qualified function in vetting those candidates seeking to provide general mental health services however, neither of these organizations can claim that they have processes in place to credential professionals specifically for work in Addictions.

The public deserves qualified providers in this area and as such, those individuals holding a CACCF designation are clearly the professional experts in Addiction & Substance Disorder Services. The individuals holding an R.Psych. or RSW are not necessarily qualified to be providing Addiction Services and thus should possess this additional certification to show this expertise. This practice is similar to the medical community where an MD working within Addiction Medicine also seeks qualification through the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM) credentialing based upon having attained specific education related to Substance Disorders. ***In Canada if you want to know that someone has been professionally credentialed in the SAE area, seek out a CACCF-RSAE or RSAS.*** The RSAE program is recognized by the CACCF as the National Standard of programming in the Substance Disorders field in relation to Safety-Sensitive Workplaces.

Summary

Operations occurring in the critical employment area of Substance Testing for safety-sensitive environments need clear standards and requirements for substance specific certification of ALL professionals providing services (Assessors and Treatment Providers, which is inclusive of Relapse Prevention Specialists). Any organization operating without qualified competent and certified substance abuse experts is running the risk of having a high rate of assessment errors, poor treatment planning and implementation, and non-competence in the area of relapse prevention. ***This lack of regulation or standardization can be problematic for the individual being assessed, the safety of the workplace, organizational assets, and the communities where safety-sensitive work is being conducted.***

Corporations, Unions, and Individuals within the safety-sensitive work environment deserve qualified substance abuse experts conducting their assessment. Potential errors at the level of assessment can negatively affect a workers career and livelihood, place people at higher risk for accidents, or potentially be a cause or contributor to a major environmental disaster. We would not consider having Substance Testing companies not be certified and standardized in their collection and analysis of saliva and urine samples; we can ensure the same standards with respect to the Substance Abuse Experts. To date, ***the only recognized and qualified organization in Canada for the certification of Substance Abuse Experts is the CACCF.***

ABOUT THE CACCF

Formerly the Addiction Intervention Association, the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation (CACCF) was formed in 1985.

KEY MESSAGES OF THE CACCF

- a. The CACCF promotes, certifies, and monitors the competency of addiction specific counsellors in Canada using current and effective practices, which are internationally recognized.
- b. The CACCF certification and its professional conduct review process provide public protection for counsellors, employers, regulatory agencies, clients and their families.
- c. The CACCF provides its counsellors with a quality, professional, credible, and legal certification, offering personal pride and satisfaction.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

- a. Offering unique certifications to counsellors since 1985
- b. Credible certification body in Canada
- c. Representation across all Canadian provinces and territories
- d. Active member of the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) certifying body
- e. International standards widely respected and abided by in the addiction profession
- f. Hailed by leading authorities throughout the world as the symbol of quality assurance

REASONS FOR CACCF CERTIFICATION

Among the many reasons to become certified are:

- a. To assure to the public a minimum level of competency for quality service by alcoholism and drug addiction counsellors
- b. To give professional recognition to qualified alcohol and drug addiction counsellors through a process that examines demonstrated work competency
- c. To assure an ongoing opportunity for alcohol and drug counsellors to further their professional development and education in the field
- d. To enable alcohol and drug counsellors to become eligible for reimbursement for the professional health care services.

ABOUT THE IC&RC

Incorporated in 1981, the IC&RC is a voluntary membership organization, which consists of other alcohol & drug certifying bodies across the United States and globally. Each certifying body belonging to the IC&RC agrees to use their minimum standards for reciprocity-eligible certifications. Each member board reviews and accepts the eligibility certificates of its sister board applications. The international standards abided by the IC&RC are widely respected and accepted, and have been positively recognized by leading authorities throughout the world as the symbol of quality assurance, within the field of addictions. The IC&RC is the largest credentialing organization in the world. In 1992, the final name change to the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) occurred to reflect the scope of the organization as it reached out to boards around the world. Canada became the first international member board of the organization.

THE BASIS OF BEING CERTIFIED

Before examinations are developed, a certifying profession must determine what skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities are needed to be a competent professional in the field. The CACCF, in cooperation with the IC&RC, has achieved this by completing job task analysis studies for alcohol and drug abuse counsellors, and for clinical supervisors. These studies followed the principles and procedures outlined in a manual entitled "Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing", published by the American Psychological Association in 1983.

The most important reason for conducting a job task analysis study is to ensure the validity of the testing procedures. In this regard, the CACCF certification process is valid, reliable, and legally defensible. One of the major functions of a certification program is the protection of the public from the incompetent practitioner. Accordingly, by selecting a CACCF certified professional, the public is given the assurance that the person has demonstrated professional competency.