



CRCC Connections News Brief

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For Immediate Release
Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification
847-944-1325

TRICARE Ruling for Mental Health Counseling

The U.S. Department of Defense has issued proposed regulations to allow licensed mental health counselors to practice independently within TRICARE, the health care program that provides services for active duty service members, retirees, and their families. Fully effective on January 1, 2015, the rule establishes qualifications for a new category of allied health professionals, Certified Mental Health Counselors (CMHCs), whereby licensed mental health counselors must pass the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Examination (NCMHCE) in addition to having a master's degree from a program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Proposed regulations include a transition period through December 31, 2014, wherein licensed mental health counselors who do not meet the new requirements for independent practice may continue to provide services to TRICARE beneficiaries under the requirements of physician referral and ongoing supervision.

ARCA (American Rehabilitation Counseling Association), CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education), CRCC, NRCA (National Rehabilitation Counselor Association), and NCRE (National Council on Rehabilitation Education) strongly believe that the exclusion of CORE graduates who have subsequently passed the NCMHCE to become licensed in their state unnecessarily restricts the number of qualified practitioners providing care and thus limits access to care for those in need of mental health counseling services, including those in underserved rural geographic locations. Correspondence has been issued both through the comment portal and to Dr. Woodson, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and Director, TRICARE Management Activity with additional follow-up underway.

Over the next few weeks the Department of Defense will be accepting and reviewing comments on the regulation in preparation for making any final changes it deems necessary based on comments received. CRCC encourages all interested CRCs to submit their comments directly to the Department of Defense following the simple steps below. Comments must be submitted by February 27, 2012.

To comment on TRICARE regulation:

1. Go to www.regulations.gov.
2. In "Select Document Type" open box (middle of page) - select "Rule" from drop-down menu.
3. In "Enter Keyword or ID" open box (middle of page) - type "certified mental health counselors."
4. Click "Search."
5. Confirm top result listed should be "TRICARE: Certified Mental Health Counselors."
6. Click "Submit a Comment" on right-hand side of this listing.
7. Type in your comment and click "Submit."

Please note you will have 20 minutes to complete the form and submit your comment.

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