

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Collaborative effort formed to protect California addiction counselors

SACRAMENTO, California (March 5, 2010) - Collaborative efforts are not new to the three largest addiction counselor certification agencies in California, and these efforts are especially important now as the profession faces a proposed comprehensive overhaul of the counselor certification laws by the State of California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP).

"Because we serve the same general constituency of alcohol and other drug counselors, some people have viewed our agencies as competing against one another; but, really, we are working together to make sure that counselors continue to have choices in their respective career paths within the addiction field," explains Susan Blacksher, Executive Director of the California Association for Addiction Recovery Resources (CAARR).

Current California law has established a uniform set of standards, specified in State Regulations, for the certification of alcohol and other drug (AOD) counselors working in State-licensed facilities. The State ADP serves as the centralized agency that enforces the certification laws relating to certified counselors, as well as relating to the approval of the certification agencies.

Before being approved as a certification agency by ADP, each certifying organization is required to successfully earn national accreditation through a comprehensive approval process, including psychometric evaluation of their respective testing procedures. Not all agencies that have applied for State-approval and national accreditation have been successful, including at least one nationally-recognized and long-time established certification agency.

Of the nine certification agencies eventually earning national accreditation and approval from ADP to issue certifications in California, each of the three largest - California Association of Addiction Recovery Resources (CAARR), California Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC), and Breining Institute - has invested over twenty years and significant monies in the development and operation of training and certification systems that have provided choices for addiction professionals in California.

"The law in California already mandates a uniform set of standards for the certification of AOD counselors," offers Warren Daniels III, Executive Director of Community Recovery Resources, former president of CAADAC and current Chair of its Foundation, the California Foundation for the Advancement of Addiction Professionals. "Each of the State-approved and nationally-accredited certifying organizations offer a unique path to meet those standards, and those options for the counselor should be maintained."

ADP proposed in Senate Bill 707 last year a comprehensive overhaul of the AOD certification laws, that would eliminate the existing certification agencies, take over the certification process, and that would, by the State's own estimates, require more than 18 new State employee positions and over \$2 million to get started. That bill died in the legislature earlier this year, but ADP has expressed its intention to go forward with its proposal.

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"We are working with ADP in the hopes of developing legislation that will take advantage of the many years of experience of the existing certifying organizations, gives the State even stronger oversight and enforcement authority over the certification process without dramatically increasing the cost of certification to the AOD counselor, and helps establish a State-licensed AOD counselor authority that will help professionalize and regulate the private practitioner," explains Michael Breining, president of Breining Institute. "We know that the ADP staff has in mind that consumer protection is a primary consideration, and we hope to help in strengthening those safeguards without unnecessarily increasing the cost of certification and putting good counselors out of work."

ADP continues to solicit input for its proposed counselor certification and licensure overhaul, and invites comments to Tina Chiginsky, Deputy Director, Office of Legislative and External Affairs, e-mail tchiginsky@adp.ca.gov.

For a look at the ADP current proposal (as of March 5, 2010), please visit ADP's web site at this link: http://adp.ca.gov/legislation/pdf/SB_707_language.pdf

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