



SB 707 ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS RE: AMENDMENTS OF APRIL 22, 2009

PROVIDED BY: CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
COUNSELORS (CAADAC)
APRIL 23, 2009

PREFACE:

We believe it is a necessity to provide CAADAC's strongest support of the department's efforts to amend SB 707 to ensure that it enhances workforce development rather than diminishing it. Overall, we view the amendments as positive and a step in the right direction. Consequently, we have provided a letter of support *if* amended. This document outlines the areas of the current version (April 22, 2009) of the bill for which CAADAC is requesting further amendments.

GRANDPARENTING:

While CAADAC is encouraged by the department's approval of language to address grandparenting for the certification level of the proposed law, we are extremely concerned about the lack of specifics regarding grandparenting at the higher levels. Counselors operating private practices have invested significantly in their careers and must be assured that they will be allowed to continue the work they do. As you know, Senator DeSaulnier's licensure bill (AB 239) highlighted the need for California to "grow the private sector" for treatment. The absence of a grandparent provision for private practitioners is contradictory to this goal.

CAADAC is cognizant of the hazards of creating a grandparenting clause for the higher levels of licensure and certification, yet we are confident it can be accomplished; we spent much of last year negotiating with other professional groups (last year) to reach an accord with which all constituents could move forward with (neutral and support to the Governor's office).

CAADAC has an extremely active grassroots organization with thousands of counselors throughout the state. Delaying a decision about the levels of experience and education needed to grandparent at the licensure level (deferring to regulations) delays our ability to fully support a measure that may effectively remove a large percentage of our members from the workforce.

CAADAC is confident that we can work toward a solution to this dilemma. We strongly believe that the licensure grandparent provision impacts our counselors to a far greater degree than those certified by other organizations; therefore, we will continue to work with the author and department to craft suitable language for this area.

BOARD ESTABLISHMENT

In addition to the primary concern regarding grandparenting, CAADAC would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our original concerns. CAADAC understands the political aspects of creating a new board in these difficult times and presumes that the lack of a board in this legislation is reflective of this influence. CAADAC continues to believe that one of the most important improvements to the bill would be the establishment of a board to oversee its provisions. An appointed board, made up of licensed/certified professionals and consumers, could more effectively carry out many of the items deferred to the "department." Such processes are common practice in other professions throughout California and the nation. CAADAC stands willing to support the department in fighting this battle if or when it is determined to be politically feasible.

FACE TO FACE, INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP COUNSELING

The section requiring 70% of the required hours be face to face, individual, or group counseling does not appear to be congruent with current nationally accepted certification/licensure standards. We believe the purpose is to ensure a pureness of experiential learning; however based on the current norms of certifying bodies, educational institutions, and provider training programs this appears to be impractical. We recommend the experiential hours be accepted provided they are within the scope of practice as outlined in section 11975.5. (This section refers to the scope of practice and services provided by a licensed or certified alcohol/drug counselor.) This recommendation compliments the board establishment suggestion previously referenced. It would be more practical for the profession and the department to utilize a board to create, implement, and sustain policies and procedures addressing experiential hours in addition to the methodology of how it is attained.

PORTABILITY OF CREDENTIALS

CAADAC appreciates the department's work on the amendments which will assure that California's workforce is included in the bill. However, it remains unclear if there will be "portability" of such credentials to ensure certified and licensed individuals have reciprocity in other states or countries. Furthermore, the examination language has been revised to state "a nationally recognized exam." However, this does not recognize the specific requirements of the exam (i.e. portability.)

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Additionally, CAADAC suggests that alcohol and drug counseling education offered widely in community colleges (WASC accredited) and private post secondary institutes who are not necessarily WASC accredited be accepted for credit toward licensure and certification. Many private post secondary educational institutions are approved by the Department of Education and/or may be accredited by a national accreditation body, such as the Accreditation Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET). A licensure/certification board with experienced professionals could help guide the accrediting of educational institutions applying to provide education to applicants. The amendments indicate "or other providers as approved by the department." We have great confidence this language includes private post secondary educational institutes.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROFESSIONALS EXEMPTION (OR INCLUSION)

Finally, Substance Abuse Professionals (SAP's) are approved to provide substance abuse services as private practitioners based on Department of Transportation (DOT) regulation per federal law. It is our position that SAP's must be *exempted* from SB 707 or *included* in the licensed category."

CLOSING

On behalf of CAADAC's legislative committee, we continue to support and uphold high standards for counselors in California. We look forward to providing further advocacy at the capitol to enable the removal of the stumbling blocks presented in the current version of SB 707, and we believe we are well on our way to success.

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