

District of Columbia Mental Health Counselors Association

Bylaws

December 2019

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

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ARTICLE 1: NAME AND PURPOSE

Section 1. Name

The name of this association shall be the “District of Columbia Mental Health Counselors Association” (DCMHCA) hereinafter called the Association, and is chartered through the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA). Both AMHCA and DCMHCA are independent and autonomous Associations.

Section 2. Vision and Purposes

Vision: The vision of DCMHCA and its members is to enhance the profession of mental health counseling through licensing, advocacy, education and professional development in the District of Columbia.

Purposes: The purposes of the DC Mental Health Counselors Association are as follows:

- To unite the interests and efforts of mental health counselors in the District of Columbia.
- To encourage, support, and promote the development of professional mental health counseling in the District of Columbia.
- To provide a communication and an information network for practicing mental health counselors.
- To increase the visibility and public awareness of mental health counselors in our nation’s capital.
- To serve as a liaison for academic and professional mental health activities.
- To provide a system of information exchange between mental health counselors through a newsletter, journal and other scientific, educational, and professional materials.
- To provide programs to mental health counselors to assist in updating and enhancing their competencies.
- To promote professional and ethical standards for counselors in the District of Columbia.
- To provide an alliance with counselors in other work settings to advance the entire profession of counseling.
- To promote scientific research and inquiry into mental health concerns.

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- To support legislative activities that benefit the consumer of mental health counseling services.
- To serve as a liaison on the local and national level with other professional groups to assist in the advancement of the mental health field.
- To provide the public with information concerning the role and function of the mental health counselor.
- To advocate for the portability of counselor licensure between states.
- To achieve reimbursement for LPCs under Medicare, Medicaid, and TRICARE programs.
- To obtain parity for LPCs as mental health providers under health insurance plans.

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Type of Membership.

There shall be six types of membership: Clinical, Professional, Emerging Professional, Graduate Student, Retired and Associate.

Section 2. Requirements for Membership.

Clinical Member

- Eligibility. Applicants for clinical membership shall meet the following standards:
- Hold at least a master's degree or higher from an accredited institution in counseling or a related area that covers the basic principles of mental health counseling;
- Hold a state license in counseling, psychology or related field;
- Currently work or actively seeking to perform duties in a clinical setting where their time is spent in direct delivery of counseling services.
- Obligations and Privileges. A clinical member must pay annual dues. A clinical member in good standing shall be entitled to vote, to attend meetings of the Association, and shall be eligible to hold office in the Association.

Professional Member

- Eligibility. Applicants for professional membership shall meet the following standards for entry level professional recognition:

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- Hold at least a master's degree from an accredited institution in counseling or a related area that covers the basic principles of mental health counseling;
- Obligations and Privileges. A professional member must pay annual dues. A professional member in good standing shall be entitled to vote, to attend meetings of the association, and shall be eligible to hold office in the association.

Emerging Professional

- Eligibility. Applicants for emerging professional membership shall meet the following standards:
 - A new masters or doctoral graduate within their first 2 years of supervised practice since graduation. Proof of graduation date may be required.
- Obligations and Privileges. An emerging professional member must pay annual dues at the student membership rate. An emerging professional member in good standing shall be entitled to vote, to attend meetings of the association, and shall not be eligible to hold office.

Graduate Student Member

- Eligibility. Applicants for graduate student membership shall meet the following standards:
 - Any student enrolled in an accredited graduate program for half-time or more in the field of psychology, mental health counseling, or human development shall be eligible to become a student member of the Association for a period not to exceed four years.
- Obligations and Privileges. A graduate student member must pay annual dues at the student membership rate. A graduate student member in good standing shall be entitled to vote, to attend meetings of the association, and shall not be eligible to hold office.

Retired Member

- Eligibility. Applicants for retired membership shall meet the following standards:
 - Any retired individual who has retired from **the field of mental health counseling, or provides related counseling services for less than 10 hours per week.**
- Obligations and Privileges. A retired member must pay annual dues at the **student membership rate. A retired member in good standing may attend meetings of the association, shall be eligible to vote, and shall not be eligible to hold office in the Association.**

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Associate Member

- Eligibility. Applicants for associate membership shall meet the following standards;
 - Any individual who works in the field of mental health counseling, or is a supporter of the mental health counseling field, i.e., community support workers,

- case managers, certified peer specialist.
- Has three (3) years in the field of counseling and a minimum of 1500 hours of direct service.
- **Obligations and Privileges.** An associate member must pay annual dues at the student membership rate. An associate member in good standing may attend meetings of the association, shall be eligible to vote, and shall not be eligible to hold office in the Association.

Section 3. Dues.

Annual Association dues for members shall be established by action of the DCMHCA Board of Directors and shall be collected by the Association Treasurer.

Section 4. Rights and Privileges.

All forms of membership with the exception of emerging professional, graduate student and retired membership are entitled to vote, and shall not be eligible to hold office in the Association. Eligibility to run for office of the Board of Directors, namely, President, President-Elect, and Treasurer must be a clinical or professional member, and hold Unified Membership with both AMCHA and DCMHCA.

Section 5. Severance of Membership.

A member may be dropped from membership for any conduct that tends to injure the Association or to adversely affect the Bylaws and Code of Ethics of the Association. Members charged with engaging in such conduct shall:

- Receive notice of the precise nature of the charge;
- Be given the opportunity to present evidence in their behalf through witnesses or otherwise;
- Shall be given the opportunity to confront witnesses against them
- Shall have the right to appeal and have a hearing before an Ethics Review Panel, under the authority of the By-Laws, Ethics and Governance Committee.

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The Ethics Review Panel shall be appointed to consider and adjudicate any charges made over the signature of two (2) Association members in good standing. Any decision made by the Ethics Review Panel may be appealed to the Board of Directors.

A member may be dropped from membership for:

- Non-payment of dues.
- Falsely certifying that professional qualifications have been met.
- Having their state license or national credentials revoked for ethical or legal violations.

- Falsely claiming AMHCA membership when not a member in good standing.

ARTICLE III: ORGANIZATION AND CORPORATE AFFILIATION

The establishment of the District of Columbia Mental Health Counselors Association (DCMHCA) shall be in compliance with the Bylaws set forth by the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA). DCMHCA shall be in accordance with policies established for transmission of reports, charter renewal standards and corporate affiliations – where relevant and applicable – as noted under Article IV, Sections 1 through 5 of the AMHCA Bylaws.

ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. Composition, Nomination, and Election of the Board of Directors.

- The DCMHCA Board of Directors shall be composed of the officers previously specified in Article IV, Section 1.
- The Board of Directors shall be elected or appointed as described in Article IV.
- If a member leaves the Board of Directors during the term of office, the President shall recommend to the Board the names of two qualified replacements. The Board of Directors shall appoint the replacement to serve for the remainder of the term.

Section 2. Powers and Functions.

- The Board of Directors shall be the agency through which the general administrative and executive functions of the Association are affected. The President of the Association shall be the chairperson of the Board.
- The Board of Directors shall conduct, manage, and control the business of the Association.

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- The Board of Directors shall hire an Executive Director who will conduct and manage the administrative functions of the organization and will provide continuity.
- The Executive Director will serve as a member of the Board/staff to the Board) and will report on the business of the Association at each meeting.

Section 3. Meetings.

- The Board of Directors shall meet at least 4 times a year, and hold ad hoc meetings as needed to complete Association business.
- Two-thirds of the officers of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum.
- The Board of Directors shall hold monthly general membership meetings. Said meetings may be in the form of luncheons, business meetings, conferences, on-line discussions etc.
- Officers of the Board of Directors must attend three-fourth of all meetings to remain in

good standing (ex: 9 out of 12 meetings).

ARTICLE V: OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Section 1. Officers

The officers of the Board of Directors shall consist of: President, President-Elect, Past President, Treasurer, Secretary, and the Executive Director. The Board of Directors shall conduct, manage and control the business of the Association in accordance with the bylaws, policies and strategic action plan in fulfillment of the Association's Charter requirements. The Board of Directors shall formulate and recommend policy, and make decisions on items of major importance to the Association. The President and the President-Elect shall approve the Chairs of standing committees. The vote of a majority of the Board of Directors present at a duly convened Board meeting is sufficient to authorize any action taken, provided a quorum exists. The Board of Directors shall not receive any compensation for services rendered on behalf of the Association.

Section 2. Election and Terms of Officers.

Call for Nominations will be announced prior to any election. A ballot with a list of nominees will be distributed to DCMHCA members in good standing. Ballots returned by the announced deadline will be tallied to determine the election outcome.

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All elected officers of the Board of Directors must hold Unified Membership and be a unified member in good standing with evidence of past leadership, Association involvement, or contribution to the mental health counseling field.

- Each officer is elected for one year, beginning September 1 through August 31, with exception of the Treasurer position.
- The Treasurer will be elected for a two (2) year term.
- The President-Elect will succeed to the office of President of the DCMHCA on September 1 of the year, or upon the resignation or death of the President. In the event the President-Elect should resign or die, or be otherwise unable to continue in the office prior to becoming President, the Past President shall fill the office.
 - Upon the conclusion of a President's term of office, he/she shall continue as a member of the Board of Directors in the office of Past President for a term of one year, or as determined by the Board of Directors.
 - Upon the conclusion of a President's term of office, he/she shall continue as a member of the Board of Directors in the office of Past President for a term of one (1) year, or as determined by the Board of Directors.

Section 3. Powers and Duties of Officers.

President

- The president shall serve as presiding officer of the DCMHCA and Chair of the DCMHCA Board of Directors.
- The president presides over board meetings.
- The president shall also serve on all Standing Committees, Task Force, and Ad Hoc Committees, participating but non-voting.
- The president shall nominate Chairs for vacant standing committees to the Board of Directors for approval.
- The president shall appoint members to fill vacancies on standing committees occurring during their term.
- The president shall perform such other duties that are relevant to the office, or may be required by vote of the Board of Directors.
- The president shall also serve as representative and liaison with AMHCA regional representatives as well as other affiliated or professional groups.
- The president, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, shall appoint the treasurer.
- If the president is unable to serve as presiding officer of the DCMHCA, the president-elect serves out the term.

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President-Elect

- The president-elect shall serve as a member of the Board of Directors.
- The president-elect shall chair the Conference Planning Committee and perform duties as may be directed by the Board.
- The president-elect shall assist the President, as may be directed by the President.
- The president-elect may call special (ad hoc) meetings.
- The president-elect shall serve as presiding officer to the DCMHCA in the absence of the President. In the event that the President-Elect should resign or die, or be otherwise unable to continue in the office prior to becoming President, the Past President shall fill the office
- The president-elect and the president shall nominate Chairs for vacant standing committees to the Board of Directors for approval.

Past President

- The Past President shall serve as a member of the Board and perform such duties as may be directed by the Board.
- The past president shall facilitate the orientation of new board members and mentor the current president.
- The past president shall chair the Nominations and Elections Committee.

Treasurer

- The treasurer shall be responsible for developing a balanced budget, and keep financial records of the Association.
- The treasurer shall make expenditures authorized by the Board of Directors, collect all monies due the Association, and prepare an itemized accounting report on the Association's financial status on a monthly basis.

- The Association shall establish and maintain a bank account for its finances to be administered by the treasurer and president.
- Each year the Board will adopt a budget as a guide to expenditures. The Board must approve significant expenditures not included in the budget. The president and the treasurer authorizes reimbursements of budgeted expenditures.

Secretary

- The secretary is an elected position and/or may be appointed by the President, and approved by the Board of Directors.
- The secretary records the minutes at all official Board meetings and responsible for the timely distribution of these minutes to the Board.
- The secretary records the minutes at all official DCMHCA Membership meetings and responsible for the timely distribution of these minutes to the DCMHCA Members.

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- The secretary shall maintain and protect the archives of the Association and pass all these records on to the next duly elected or appointed Secretary at the end of his/her term of office.
- The secretary shall perform other duties as customarily pertains to the office and as may be directed by the President and the Board.

Section 4: Removal from office.

A member of the Board of Directors may be removed from office for failure to perform assigned duties. A two-thirds majority of the Board of Directors shall be required to remove an elected member from their position.

- The Bylaws, Ethics and Governance Committee of the DCMHCA is comprised of the committee chairperson, committee co-chair, Association president, president-elect, past president, any member assigned by the president-elect.
- Any member may submit to the Bylaws, Ethics and Governance Committee information regarding the issue of removal of an officer of the Board of Directors. The Bylaws, Ethics and Governance Committee shall submit to the Board of Directors information received or gathered regarding the issue of removal of an officer of the Board of Directors.
- Reasons for removal from office on the Board of Directors are:
 - Failure to carry out duties/responsibilities of office.
 - A vote of no-confidence in the officer currently filling the position.
 - Violation of AMHCA's Code of Ethics.
- Voluntary resignation of any officer may be requested by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors, less the accused board member, may vote by two-thirds majority to request a voluntary resignation of the officer. If voluntary resignation is declined, the process of removal from office must be initiated in writing.
- For this process to begin, the following steps will apply:
 - Written documentation of charge(s) must be presented to DCMHCA President. In cases where the President is being charged, the Past President shall receive the written

- documentation of the charges.
- Written notification of charge(s) must be provided to the officer in question, and to the DCMHCA Board of Directors.
- Consideration of this issue will be reviewed, in closed executive session, by the DCMHCA Board of Directors.

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- Attempts to resolve the issue will be made through appropriate communication channels with intent to keep the person in office, if possible.
- The accused officer will have an opportunity to respond to charge(s), either in person or in written form, to the Board of Directors.
- Removal from office can occur by a two-thirds majority vote by the Board of Directors.
- Removal from office is not official until five days from the date of action taken by the DCMHCA Board of Directors.
- The Appeal process is available within three days from the date of the action taken by the DCMHCA Board.
- If removal from office results, written notice to this effect will be provided to the person charged by the DCMHCA President. The removal will also be recorded in the minutes of the next Board of Directors meeting, along with the effective date of removal.
- Ethical violations must be dealt with according to procedures detailed in the AMHCA policy.

ARTICLE VI: BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Section 1. Fiscal Year.

The fiscal year shall be **from October 1 thru Sept. 30.**

Section 2. Property of the Association.

In the event the Association should be dissolved, none of its property shall be distributed to any of the members. Instead, all of its property shall be transferred to such organizations as the Board of Directors determines to have purposes or activities most nearly consonant with those of the Association, provided, however, that such organizations shall be exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding provisions of the Internal Revenue Laws.

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ARTICLE VII: COMMITTEES

The committees of the DCMHCA shall consist of standing committees and such special committees as may be deemed necessary by the Board of Directors. A special committee shall serve until, in the opinion of the President, the purpose of the committee is accomplished.

Committee Chair appointments will be appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors. Committee Chairs shall be responsible to provide the Board of Directors an annual roster of committee members and updates as requested by the Board of Directors. Each Committee Chair shall serve a term of two years and may be re-appointed for additional terms.

Appointments to all committees will be made collaboratively between the President-Elect and the Board of Directors. The President-Elect will submit the vacant committee nominations to the Board of Directors for approval, prior to assuming the office of President. A standing committee member shall serve for a period of one year following appointment. Committee members may be reappointed for subsequent years.

Within the Board of Directors, there is an Executive Committee composed of the President, President-Elect, Past President, Treasurer, and the Executive Director where applicable.

Section 1. Standing Committees

The following shall be standing committees of the DCMHCA:

- Nominations and Elections Committee
- Membership Committee
- Bylaws, Ethics and Governance
- Government Relations, Licensure and Accreditation
- Consumer and Public Relations
- Professional Development and Supervision

Nominations and Elections Committee: The Past President automatically serves as the Chairperson of the Nominations and Elections Committee. The committee is responsible for carrying out nominations and elections procedures. Develops slate of candidates and manages the election process. Committee members consist of the Past President, one member of the Board of Directors, and one clinical member of DCMHCA, in good standing that is not a member of the Board.

Membership Committee: The committee is responsible to conduct activities that actively

promote, increase, manage and maintain the DCMHCA membership among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Mental Health Counselor Interns, Graduate students, Counselor Educators, and others with professional or job-related interests in mental health counseling. Members of the Membership Committee shall include the President and such other members as may be appointed by the President.

Bylaws, Ethics, and Governance: The committee is responsible to revise the bylaws and resolve matters related to organizational rules and guidelines. The committee will receive, review, publish and distribute the bylaws to the membership every four years. The committee chair will make recommendations to the Board of any proposed revisions of the bylaws. The committee will publish and distribute the bylaws to the membership every four years. The committee will receive and review requests from DCMHCA members relating to the ethical conduct of Association members, officers, and any other issue of an ethical nature that may come before the Association. The committee chair will make recommendation for action to the Board of Directors. Members of the committee will include the President and such other members as may be appointed by the President.

Government Relations, Licensure, and Accreditation: The committee will keep abreast of Federal and State policies that affect LPCs in the District of Columbia. The committee will be responsible for advocating for the DCMHCA legislative Issues, agency regulation and encroachment by other entities that impact the profession of mental health counseling in the District of Columbia. Advocacy for legislation that recognizes and advances the profession of mental health counseling will be a priority. The committee will identify and support laws, programs and practices affecting the practice of mental health counseling. The committee, at the request of the Board of Directors, will provide liaison on the state level with other professional organizations to promote the profession of mental health counselors.

Consumer and Public Relations: This committee will manage and oversee media, publications and online presence of the Association.

Professional Development and Supervision: This committee will monitor the professional development needs of the Association's members. It will develop and implement a comprehensive plan of continuing education directed towards clinical and practical issues. The committee will be responsible for providing workshops, publications, and in-service opportunities related to identified needs. The committee will communicate with other DCMHCA committees concerning professional development activities for the membership.

Section 2. Committee Reports

Each committee chair shall submit a written report to the Board of Directors that includes the salient activities, financial information, and progress of the committee.

Section 3. Task Force and Ad Hoc Committees

Task Force and Ad Hoc Committees may be established as deemed necessary by the President to or Ad Hoc committee chair and members shall be appointed by the President, and the term shall last no longer than the appointing President's term in office. Each Task Force shall submit a written report to the President the salient activities, financial information, and progress of the

Task Force or Ad Hoc Committee. The Task Force and Ad Hoc Committee can be recommissioned by the incoming president as needed to complete their charge.

Section 4. Diversity

The DCMHCA is a diverse Association that welcomes people of different races, cultures, ages, genders, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic level, and political perspectives. We strive to reflect diversity in our membership and actions.

ARTICLE VIII: MEDIA AND PUBLICATIONS

Section 1. Media Input, Management and Oversight

- The President shall appoint the editor(s) for the DCMHCA periodical(s). The editor shall serve for a period of two years.
- The Consumer and Public Relations Committee will oversee the online presence of the DCMHCA including the website, Facebook and other media outlets.

Section 2. Media Contact.

The President or his/her designate will be the only authorized spokesperson for the DCMHCA to the media.

ARTICLE IX: BYLAWS

Section 1. Amendment and Adoption.

These Bylaws may be amended by a two-third majority vote of the Board of Directors and ratified by the president during a membership meeting.

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Section 2. Notification of Bylaws change.

The Board of Directors and the membership must be notified prior to any Board meeting of any proposal to add or amend the By-Laws.

ARTICLE X: RULES OF ORDER

Section 1. Parliamentary Authority.

The parliamentary authority for the meetings of the Association will be the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order (by Henry Martin Robert).

Adopted: 1985

Amended: 2000, November 2019