

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Revised

Senate Bill 882

(Senator Middleton)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health and Government Operations

---

Certified Professional, Associate, and Supervised Counselors-Alcohol and Drug -  
Qualifications

---

This bill requires that certified professional, associate, and supervised counselors-alcohol and drug complete *clinically* supervised experience as a condition of certification. In addition, the bill authorizes the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists to waive the requirement that, in order to qualify as a certified professional, associate, or supervised counselor-alcohol and drug, an applicant complete the requisite amount of supervised *clinical* experience in alcohol and drug counseling after obtaining a required degree. This waiver could be granted only if the applicant had at least five years of *clinically* supervised experience in alcohol and drug counseling approved by the board prior to obtaining the required degree.

---

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill would not directly affect governmental finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Meaningful to the extent the *clinical* supervision requirement limits the ability of applicants to initially qualify for certification and existing certificate holders to renew their certification.

---

Analysis

**Current Law:** Certification of alcohol and drug counselors is tiered, with the level of certification determined by an applicant's level of education and amount of supervised

experience. Currently, none of the supervised experience has to be clinical. The board also licenses clinical alcohol and drug counselors, who must have either a master's or doctoral degree as well as meet more extensive experience requirements, including supervised clinical experience.

To qualify as a certified supervised counselor-alcohol and drug, an applicant has to have

- an associate's degree in a health or human services counseling field;
- completed at least two years, with at least 2,000 hours of supervised experience in alcohol and drug counseling approved by the board, one year of which must have been completed after the applicant is awarded his or her associate's degree; and
- completed least 15 credit hours in alcohol and drug counselor training.

A supervised counselor-alcohol and drug has to practice alcohol and drug counseling under the supervision of a certified professional counselor-alcohol and drug or another health care provider approved by the board *and* provide alcohol and drug counseling as an employee of accredited agency or facility.

To qualify as a certified associate counselor-alcohol and drug, an applicant has to have

- completed a bachelor's degree in a counseling field;
- completed at least three years of supervised experience in alcohol and drug counseling approved by the board, two years of which must have been completed after the applicant is awarded his or her bachelor's degree; and
- completed at least 20 credit hours in specified alcohol and drug counselor training.

A certified associate counselor-alcohol and drug has to practice under the supervision of a certified professional counselor-alcohol and drug or another health care provider approved by the board *or* provide alcohol and drug counseling as an employee of an accredited agency or facility.

To qualify as a certified professional counselor-alcohol and drug, an applicant has to

- hold a masters or doctoral degree in a health and human services counseling field;
- have completed at least 25 credit hours in alcohol and drug counseling training; and
- have completed at least three years with a minimum of 2,000 hours of supervised experience in alcohol and drug counseling approved by the board, two years of which have to have been completed after the applicant is awarded his or her bachelor's degree.

To qualify for a renewal certification, an applicant has to otherwise be entitled to be certified.

**Background:** Certified alcohol and drug counselors assist individuals and groups in developing an understanding of substance abuse problems by helping to define goals, make decisions, and plan a course of action for recovery. In 2007, the board regulated 836 certified supervised counselors-alcohol and drug, 755 certified associate counselors-alcohol and drug, 9 certified professional counselors-alcohol and drug, and 385 licensed clinical counselors-alcohol and drug. According to the board, Maryland

alcohol and substance abuse treatment programs suffer from a shortage of qualified counselors.

**Additional Comments:** Clinically supervised experience required under the bill as a condition of certification would likely have to be provided by a licensed clinical counselor-alcohol and drug. If this were the case, the number of professional, associate, and supervised counselors-alcohol and drug who are able to complete the required clinical experience would be limited by the number of licensed clinical counselors in the State. As noted above, in 2007, the board regulated only 385 such licensed clinical counselors in the State. Further, since applicants have to otherwise be entitled to be certified in order to qualify for renewal certification, currently certified professional, associate, and supervised counselors-alcohol and drug would also have to complete the required clinical experience before renewing a license. As the bill does not grandfather existing certificate holders, *currently certified* professional, associate, and supervised counselors-alcohol and drug seeking renewal would have to meet additional supervision requirements in order to renew their certification, which would also be limited by the number of licensed clinical counselors in the State.

---

### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 11, 2008  
mam/ljm Revised - Senate Third Reader - April 1, 2008

---

Analysis by: Sarah K. Harvey

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510