

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 474

(Senator Pinsky)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health and Government Operations

**State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists - Certified Professional
Counselor-Alcohol and Drug - Repeal**

This bill repeals the issuance of new Certified Professional Counselor-Alcohol and Drug (CPC-AD) certifications by the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists. The board's authority to (1) waive the requirements for certification for an applicant licensed or certified to practice as a CPC-AD in another state; (2) place a CPC-AD on inactive status; or (3) reinstate the certificate of a CPC-AD is also repealed. Individuals holding a valid CPC-AD certification may continue to practice and renew their certification.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues and expenditures for the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists may decline beginning in FY 2013 from elimination of the issuance of new CPC-AD certifications. Given the historically low number issued, any reduction in revenues (and the corresponding reduction in expenditures associated with issuance of the certifications) is anticipated to be minimal. Furthermore, those individuals who might otherwise qualify as a CPC-AD may instead choose to fulfill additional educational requirements and seek licensure as a licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor at the same initial fee and slightly higher renewal fee than CPC-AD applicants, which could result in a minimal increase in special fund revenues for the board in future years.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/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. Licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselors are additionally authorized to diagnose and treat psychological disorders. Unlike the other types of counselors regulated by the board, the majority of alcohol and drug counselors (78.8%) have chosen to be certified rather than licensed.

The CPC-AD credential is one of three tiers of alcohol and drug counseling certifications issued by the board along with Certified Supervised Counselor-Alcohol and Drug and Certified Associate Counselor-Alcohol and Drug. To qualify as a CPC-AD, an individual must have a master's or doctoral degree in a counseling field, a minimum of 25 credit hours in alcohol and drug counselor training and other specified coursework, at least three years of supervised clinical experience, and pass both the Examination for Masters Addiction Counseling and a State law examination.

To move from CPC-AD to licensure as a clinical alcohol and drug counselor, an individual must obtain at least nine additional graduate level credit hours in diagnosis and psychopathology, psychotherapy and treatment of mental and emotional disorders, and psychotherapy in alcohol and drug disorders.

According to the board, certification as a CPC-AD is dwindling among alcohol and drug counselors. Of the total 1,796 alcohol and drug counselors regulated by the board, only 25 (1.4%) hold a CPC-AD. In contrast, 751 (41.8%) hold a Certified Associate Counselor-Alcohol and Drug certification, 641 (35.7%) hold a Certified Supervised Counselor-Alcohol and Drug certification, and 379 (21.1%) are licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselors.

In 2007, the Department of Legislative Services conducted a full sunset evaluation of the board. The report recommended, among other things, that the board review the certification structure for alcohol and drug counselors to determine whether the three-tiered certification structure is of continued benefit to the profession and the public. In its 2010 response to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and House Health and Government Operations committees, the board concluded that the certified supervised and certified associate tiers should be continued, while the CPC-AD tier should be discontinued. More specifically, the board recommended that the credential be repealed for new applicants, while authorizing currently certified CPC-ADs to renew their certification and continue practicing nonclinical alcohol and drug counseling.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 348 (Delegate Hubbard) - Health and Government Operations.

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

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Analysis by: Jennifer B. Chasse

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