

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 575

(Senator Nathan-Pulliam)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health and Government Operations

Health Occupations - Alcohol and Drug Counselors - Qualifications and Practice
Limitations

This bill makes clarifying corrections and updates to the education and supervision qualifications for licensed clinical- and graduate counselors-alcohol and drug and for certified associate and certified supervised counselors-alcohol and drug. The bill also clarifies limitations for practicing as a certified associate counselor-alcohol and drug (CAC-AD) or as a certified supervised counselor-alcohol and drug (CSC-AD).

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill largely clarifies current law; thus, the bill's changes can be handled with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Qualifications for a Licensed Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LCADC)

An applicant must, at a minimum, (1) hold a master's or doctoral degree in a health and human services counseling field from a *regionally* accredited, board-approved educational institution or (2) *hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited educational institution and* have completed a program of studies that the board determines is

substantially equivalent in subject matter. An applicant completes 60 semester credit hours (or 90 quarter credit hours), of which 39 semester credit hours (or 65 quarter credit hours) must be in alcohol and drug counselor training in 11 specified required courses. The required courses must be completed at a *regionally accredited educational institution*. An applicant must also complete an internship in alcohol and drug counseling totaling 6 semester credit hours (or 10 quarter credit hours).

The bill reduces the number of required years of supervised experience in alcohol and drug counseling from three to two, but the minimum of 2,000 hours of supervised experience remains the same. An applicant must provide documentation of this supervised experience. An applicant must pass both an examination approved by the board and the law examination administered by the board.

Qualifications for a Licensed Graduate Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LGADC)

The board is authorized to adopt regulations to allow an individual to practice under *clinical* supervision as a LGADC. To qualify to practice as a LGADC, an individual must have, at minimum, a master's or doctoral degree in a health and human services counseling field from a *regionally accredited, educational institution* and 27 semester credit hours (or 41 quarter credit hours) in alcohol and drug counselor training. Of these required credit hours, the bill specifies six courses that an LGADC must take and a choice of any three of another five courses. The required courses must be completed at a *regionally accredited educational institution*.

An applicant must pass a national, board-approved alcohol and drug counselor examination and the law examination administered by the board.

Qualifications and Practice Limitations for a Certified Associate Counselor-Alcohol and Drug (CAC-AD)

An applicant must be of good moral character, and at a minimum, must (1) hold a bachelor's degree from a *regionally accredited and board-approved institution* in a health and human services counseling field or (2) *hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited educational institution and have completed a program of studies that the board determines is substantially equivalent in subject matter*. The bill reduces the number of required years of supervised experience in alcohol and drug counseling from three to one, but the minimum of 2,000 hours of clinically supervised experience remains the same. An applicant must have a minimum of 33 semester credit hours (or 50 quarter credit hours) in alcohol and drug counselor training. The bill specifies that, of these required credit hours, an applicant must complete six specified courses and has a choice of any three of another five courses. The required courses must be completed at a *regionally accredited*

educational institution. An applicant must also complete an internship in alcohol and drug counseling totaling 6 semester credit hours (or 10 quarter credit hours).

An applicant must pass a board-approved examination and the law examination administered by the board.

A CAC-AD may not practice independently and must only practice under the supervision of specified board-approved alcohol and drug supervisors. Further, a CAC-AD may only provide alcohol and drug counseling (1) as an employee of a State-certified or licensed agency or facility and (2) under the supervision of a board-approved supervisor. A CAC-AD may provide supervision only with the board's approval.

Qualifications and Practice Limitations for a Certified Supervised Counselor-Alcohol and Drug (CSC-AD)

An applicant must be of good moral character and, at a minimum, (1) hold an associate's degree *from a regionally accredited educational institution* in a health and human services counseling field or (2) *hold an associate's degree from a regionally accredited educational institution* and have completed a program of studies that the board determines is substantially equivalent in subject matter. An applicant must have a minimum of 24 semester credit hours (or 37 quarter credit hours). The bill specifies that, of these required credit hours, an applicant must complete three specified courses and has a choice of any three of another eight courses. The required courses must be completed at a *regionally accredited educational institution.* An applicant must also complete an internship in alcohol and drug counseling totaling 6 semester credit hours (or 10 quarter credit hours).

An applicant must pass a board-approved examination and the law examination administered by the board.

A CSC-AD may not provide supervision or practice independently and must only practice under the supervision of specified board-approved alcohol and drug supervisors. Further, a CSC-AD may only provide alcohol and drug counseling as an employee of a State-certified or licensed agency or facility and under the supervision of a board-approved supervisor.

Current Law: There are two tiers of alcohol and drug counselors: licensed and certified. Within these tiers, there are licensed clinical counselors, licensed graduate counselors, certified associate counselors, and certified supervised counselors.

An LCADC must hold a master's or a doctoral degree in a health or human services counseling field or have completed a program of studies judged by the board to be

substantially equivalent in subject matter; have completed at least 60 graduate credit hours approved by the board, of which 26 must be in alcohol and drug counselor training; and have completed no less than three years with a minimum of 2,000 hours of supervised experience, two years of which must be completed after the applicant is awarded his or her master's or doctoral degree.

An LGADC may practice under supervision for a limited period of time if he or she has a master's or doctoral degree in a health and human services counseling field and has passed the National Alcohol and Drug Counselor Examination.

To qualify as a CAC-AD, an applicant must hold a bachelor's degree in a health and human services counseling field or have completed a program of studies judged by the board to be substantially equivalent in subject matter; have 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 have completed at least 21 credit hours in alcohol and drug counselor training. An applicant must pass a board-approved examination. A CAC-AD must 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 CSC-AD, an applicant must hold an associate's degree in a health and human services counseling field or have completed a program of studies judged by the board to be substantially equivalent in subject matter; have completed at least two years, with a minimum of 2,000 hours of clinically supervised experience in alcohol and drug counseling approved by the board, one year of which must have been completed after the award of the degree; and have completed at least 15 credit hours in alcohol and drug counselor training. An applicant must pass a board-approved examination. A CSC-AD must practice 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 an accredited agency or facility.

Background: According to the board, the bill is intended to address challenges (identified by a workgroup in 2013 and 2014) affecting the profession's ability to maintain a sufficient workforce to support the need for substance use disorder services.

Small Business Impact: The bill has no material impact on small businesses that employ the types of counselors affected by the bill (LCADCs, LGADCs, CAC-ADs, and CSC-ADs) because, according to the board, the bill clarifies current law, codifies current practice, and updates statutory language. The licensing and certification qualification clarifications do not impact current licensees or certificants.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 629 (Delegate Pena-Melnyk, *et al.*) - Health and Government Operations.

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

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