



**American Mental Health
Counselors Association**
107 S West Street, Suite 779
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
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April 14, 2020

Jolie Long
Executive Director
American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB)
7A Terrace Way
Greensboro, NC 27403

Dear Jolie:

The American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), composed of 7000 Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors (LCMHCs), are front-line Primary Mental Health Care Providers who provide behavioral health care services for the betterment of mental health and well-being. LCMHCs are uniquely positioned to help address the behavioral health-related dimensions of health care issues. We stand ready to assist you in addressing the needs of all Americans as part of your challenge to deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

The AMHCA Ethics Committee has recently developed a statement and I was asked to forward this position to AASCB for consideration.

***STATEMENT BY THE AMHCA ETHICS COMMITTEE ON "THE NEED FOR STATES TO OFFER
LICENSURE PORTABILITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC" (April 2020)***

The coronavirus crisis has brought to light and created an urgency regarding a long-standing ethical dilemma faced by many clinical mental health counselors (CMHCs). This crisis has also increased, probably exponentially, the number of CMHCs practicing technology supported counseling and communications. When a client crosses state lines, the counselor's obligation to that client does not immediately cease. Section B.5 of the AMHCA Code of Ethics (2020) clearly states: "CMHCs do not abandon or neglect their counseling clients." There are some state licensing rules or laws that have failed to recognize this ethical obligation and have therefore forced CMHC's into a position that is unethical. We are therefore asking all states, that have not already done so, to allow some transitional sessions to take place across state lines when there is already an established counseling relationship, until such time as it would be possible for the counselor to either acquire a license in the state where the client is now located, or allow a sufficient number of sessions for closure and allowing the client to transition to a counselor who is licensed in that state.

Responding effectively to COVID-19 is a responsibility AMHCA shares, and the policy decisions made in the days, weeks, and months ahead will have a tremendous impact on both the physical and mental health of individuals, families and communities. Concrete actions by the state counseling boards and state policymakers can go along in alleviating the immediate and long-term mental health impacts of this pandemic. The time to act is now. Thank you for your consideration on this position statement.

Sincerely,

Eric T. Beeson, Ph.D., President
American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)

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