



Joint Statement on a National Counselor Licensure Endorsement Process April 2017

During the last year, representatives of the American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB), the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) worked together to create a Portability Task Force with one goal: a safe, clear, reasonable portability process for all current and future counselors.* The task force agreed upon five (5) key tenets that informed each decision by the task force.

Specifically, a uniform licensure endorsement process *must*:

1. Significantly increase public access to qualified care;
2. Establish minimum standards for safe practice;
3. Reduce administrative burdens for both state regulatory boards and licensees;
4. Create consistency in licensure standards across state lines; and
5. Ensure protection of the public and the continued development of the profession.

The Portability Task Force agreed on the importance of honoring the work and practices already adopted by state regulatory boards while developing a portability process. Consequently, the task force conducted a thorough analysis of all state regulatory practices related to reciprocity, portability and licensure endorsement.

This state-by-state analysis revealed the need for a more refined goal for portability—that of achieving a balance between establishing **minimum licensure endorsement standards** for public protection and moving the profession toward the future goal of **unified education standards, examination requirements and years of postgraduate experience**.

Throughout our research, analysis and collaborative efforts, the Portability Task Force prioritized **public protection** and **the future of the counseling profession** over any one organization's previously established portability policy or organizational agenda. This deep commitment to unity is reflected in a portability process that represents meaningful compromises by AASCB, ACES, AMHCA and NBCC.

By capitalizing on the historical knowledge of all organizations involved in the Portability Task Force and the history of state regulatory standards, AASCB, ACES, AMHCA and NBCC agreed upon a unified portability process that is as much a recognition of our shared past as it is a step forward into our shared future.

In an era of a mobile workforce, which is increasingly receptive to innovative service delivery such as telemental health services and military-friendly licensure processes, a national portability process is more vital than ever. To be a **counselor** *must hold the same meaning* to a citizen as it does to a policymaker from state to state. After 30+ years of wrangling with the issue of portability, the time has come to **pave a path forward** for highly qualified current and future counselors to improve client access to services.

We recognize that no portability process is a “silver bullet” that resolves all concerns related to portability. However, we strongly believe that our portability process will significantly benefit mental health consumers by increasing access to needed care and services and helping create a vibrant workforce of licensed counselors both in terms of changing regulatory standards and the increasing need for united advocacy efforts.

In addition, for a secure counselor portability licensure process with ensured consumer protections to be in place, a careful vetting of counselors seeking portability should include background checks to strengthen public protection. Enhancing the ability of states to share investigative and disciplinary information will help assure the public that key protections are in place.

AASCB, ACES, AMHCA and NBCC present the counseling profession’s historic, united, collaborative portability process for all counselors licensed at the highest level of licensure for independent practice. The Portability Task Force asks each state regulatory board to consider adopting the *National Counselor Licensure Endorsement Process*.

We understand and appreciate that such a change will require rule and possible statutory changes for many state regulatory boards.

We are asking each state regulatory board to embrace this opportunity to facilitate increased access to care by mobilizing a more nimble workforce of counselors in order to be part of a shared future in which true licensure portability is a reality.

National Counselor Licensure Endorsement Process

Any counselor licensed at the highest level of licensure for independent practice available in his or her state may obtain licensure in any other state or territory of the United States if all of the following criteria are met:

1. The licensee has engaged in ethical practice, with no disciplinary sanctions, for at least 5 years from the date of application for licensure endorsement.
2. The licensee has possessed the highest level of counselor licensure for independent practice for **at least 3 years** from the date of application for licensure endorsement.
3. The licensee has completed a jurisprudence or equivalent exam if required by the state regulatory body.
4. The licensee complies with **ONE** of the following:
 - a. Meets all academic, exam and postgraduate supervised experience standards as adopted by the state counseling licensure board.
 - b. Holds the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential, in good standing, as issued by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).
 - c. Holds a graduate-level degree from a program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

**The American Counseling Association participated in the Portability Task Force meetings but decided against endorsement of the collaborative portability process.*