



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS
AND AFFILIATES



Inclusion in Occupational Health Series



We Are NBCC:

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing access to counseling and mental health resources worldwide through counselor certification, assessment, advocacy, and capacity building. NBCC established and administers the national certification system for professional counselors, ensuring that National Certified Counselors meet the established standards of practice through **Education, Examination, Supervision**, and **Ethical Guidelines**. Through our affiliate, the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE), the organization also administers the examination program for state licensure and provides services to increase the efficiency of state and jurisdictional regulation.

Standards of Practice

1. Education
2. Examination
3. Supervision
4. Ethical Guidelines

What We Do:

- **Certify** counselors who meet rigorous education and experience standards.
- **Provide** high-quality assessments to ensure counselors are prepared to serve the public.
- **Advocate** for the importance and recognition of mental health counselors (MHCs) in various sectors.

Importance and Impact of Mental Health Counselors (MHCs):

- **Access to Care:** MHCs provide crucial mental health services to underserved populations, improving overall community health.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Studies indicate that MHCs can reduce overall health care costs by providing preventative mental health services. ¹
- **Quality of Care:** MHCs are trained to address a wide range of mental health issues, contributing to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction.
- **Workforce Needs:** Increasing MHC representation enhances the ability to serve low-income and rural communities effectively.

Our Request:

We urge the incorporation of the following key points into policy discussions to enhance support for U.S. consumers served by National Certified Counselors and mental health counselors. Approval of these policies will increase consumer access to services provided by counselors.

Inclusion in Occupational Health Series (OHS)

- **Inclusion in the Indian Health Services (IHS)** occupational health series would formally recognize mental health counselors (MHCs) as essential providers, as the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs currently allows within their OHS.
- This recognition would facilitate **better health outcomes for service members and Indigenous populations**.

Current Status

- IHS has made the appropriate updates requested by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to approve the OHS.
- **Hiring freeze:** The National Indian Health Board, the National Council of Urban Indian Health, the National Congress of American Indians, and the Self-Governance Communication and Education Tribal Consortium requested an exemption for IHS from the hiring freeze for civilian employee positions. In 2021, the Trump administration excluded IHS from the then hiring freeze.
 - o Represents:
 - 574 Tribal Nations
 - 41 Urban Indian Organizations

Counselors work in a variety of roles in the federal government:

- Department of Defense
- Department of Veteran Affairs
- Government Accountability Office
- Health and Human Services
- Indian Health Services
- National Institute of Mental Health
- United States Public Health Service*

- o *USPHS recently updated the accessioning policy to include counselors.



¹ Le, LK-D., Esturas, A. C., Mihalopoulos, C., Chiotelis, O., Bucholtz, J., Chatterton, M. L., & Engel, L. (2021). Cost-effectiveness evidence of mental health prevention and promotion interventions: A systematic review of economic evaluations. *PLOS Medicine*, 18(5), e1003606. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1003606>