

Addiction Exchange

News from the worlds of clinical practice and research

Vol. 2, No. 5
June 15, 2000

Brought to you by FAX, email, and on the web by the Mid-Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center,
A CSAT-funded Center

Welcome to *Addiction Exchange*, a forum for the exchange of clinical practice and research information among clinicians, scientists, educators, and administrators in the field of addiction. In this issue, we discuss the work of Dr. Ann Bristow and Colleen Cook at Frostburg State University, Md. They received a grant from the Mid-Atlantic ATTC to study academic leveling of TAP 21, Addiction Counselor Competencies: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes (CSAT, 1999) (referred to as KSAs throughout this issue).

The goal of this project is to develop model curricula based on TAP 21 at three academic levels: associate, baccalaureate, and masters degrees. The project addresses a number of important issues in addiction counseling education. This edition of *Addiction Exchange* examines 1) addiction specific vs. non-specific course content; 2) which competencies are best developed at which academic level; and 3) which competencies are best developed in academic vs. field experience settings. In the next edition, we will discuss the issue of personal awareness in model curricula.

Faculty from Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia are participating in this project by considering how education and training for each KSA would be best accomplished in two areas. The first is **course content**, which can be addiction-specific or non-addiction-specific (i.e., Introduction to Human Behavior). The second area is **addiction treatment-based experiences**, such as, *internships, on-the-job training, and continuing education*. Participants in the project have identified KSAs that are clearly best covered in addiction-specific courses; others are well covered by non-specific courses. For some areas, content in a non-specific course, (i.e., ethics), could benefit from exposure to addiction-specific coverage as well, such as confidentiality issues inherent in the treatment of substance-dependent clients. In these areas, consideration must be given to either internship or on-the-job training experiences as an efficient way to develop the competency. This is recommended as an alternative to requiring that all students take an addiction-specific ethics course.

As part of this project, faculty found it helpful to view this categorization system developmentally. Students would first take college courses at one of the academic levels. The next step would be to participate in an internship, followed by on-the-job training as an entry-level employee. This would be followed by attendance at continuing education workshops/courses. Another developmental stage could be moving to the next academic level. Faculty members are reviewing the Tap 21 KSAs from the perspective of each academic program level (associate, bachelors, or masters) to provide feedback on how each KSA should be addressed in terms of **course content** and **experience**.

Faculty in this project and in addiction education in general must also consider the realities of economics. Many academic programs will not have the luxury of developing a competency through a variety of training strategies. Though many competencies would ideally be covered in addiction-specific courses, many chemical dependency programs are "embedded" within other allied health or human service programs where KSAs can be covered in a general course, thus minimizing the expense of a specialized course. Therefore it is important for faculty in this project to identify an acceptable level of development of addiction counseling competencies that can occur in non-specific courses. Ideally, this would help programs effectively use their limited resources by identifying which competencies need to be offered in specific courses and which could be covered in general courses.

One of the recommendations faculty have identified is that a competency that has a *high probability of changing over time* (such as current pharmacological knowledge) requires a different educational approach. Research advancements in the field in these competency areas would need to be covered in addiction-specific course work as well as in updates provided by continuing education.

Interested readers can participate in this project in two ways. Log onto the Mid-ATTC's Addiction Exchange Forum at <http://www.mid-attc.org> and respond to the following questions: **First question:** What competencies for addiction counselors can be addressed in general counseling courses (or other training experiences) versus having to be taught in addiction-specific courses? **Second question:** At what academic level is the competency best developed? **Third question:** Which competencies should be developed in the classroom and which ones in addiction-treatment experiences? The second option is to participate in the categorization project by contacting Ann Bristow at 301-687-4446 or abristow@frostburg.edu.

We hope you find *Addiction Exchange* useful in your work. Please let us know about your information needs by emailing the editor of *Addiction Exchange* at mid-attc@mindspring.com, or discuss your training needs by contacting us by email or telephone at (804)-828-9910. Visit the Mid-ATTC website at <http://www.mid-attc.org/>.



Please copy and distribute to your colleagues and students!!!!