

Addiction Exchange

Vol. 2, No. 6

News from the worlds of clinical practice and
research

July 1, 2000

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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, Dr. Ann Bristow and Colleen Cook at Frostburg State University, MD continue discussing the academic leveling of TAP 21, Addiction Counselor Competencies: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes (CSAT, 1999). This project is funded by the Mid-ATTC.

As mentioned in the previous issue (Vol.2, No. 5), the purpose of this project is to develop TAP 21-based model curricula at three levels of higher education: associate, baccalaureate, and masters degree levels. In this current issue, we look at the leveling of self-awareness. Our initial "dissection" of TAP 21, using a leveling lens, revealed competencies with self-awareness components across knowledge, skills, and attitudes, though most of those related to self-awareness were in the attitude sections. We mention this because of the relative difficulty assessing attitudes compared to knowledge and skills.

In a desire to focus more closely on self-awareness, we interviewed faculty members at each academic level, in programs that target professional and personal development of the student. We asked faculty in an Associate Human Services program, an accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program, and a Masters in Counseling Psychology program about curricular and extra-curricular strategies to facilitate self-awareness and multicultural awareness. All three programs espoused a commitment to enhancing self-awareness of their students. The BSW program was mandated to maintain that focus via the National Association of Social Work accreditation process.

These common features were apparent among the academic programs: selective admissions, clear growth expectation established at the beginning of the program of study, continued monitoring of students' development, a focus on self-reflection both in course work and extracurricular activities, focus on students' giving and receiving feedback, and intensive practicum/internship supervision, including supervision by program faculty. A problem identified by all programs was dual-role issues for educators; that is, boundaries could be blurred when educators provide feedback about students' developmental issues.

Recently, we met with educators from Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland to discuss leveling self-awareness. There were two overarching conclusions from this collaboration. First, self-awareness "training" must be embedded within academic programs which target self-awareness and multicultural awareness. Although each course can incorporate self-reflection and other awareness-enhancing exercises, development must be monitored over time in terms of students' receptivity to feedback and willingness to change based on that feedback. After reviewing TAP 21 self-awareness and multicultural awareness dimensions, participant-educators agreed that these would be best addressed in a systematic or programmatic way.

Second, these educators decided that the TAP 21 self-awareness areas are not conducive to academic leveling. There are too many confounds that pertain to individual student variation as well as the transdisciplinary nature of addiction education. Individual differences among students include maturity, cultural background and multicultural exposure, past involvement in consultation/supervision, and recovery status. Any of these may or may not co-vary with academic level. One suggestion for incorporating self-awareness at any academic level is to use TAP 21 for baseline evaluative criteria of entering students. Beyond a minimum level of established competence, all students would be expected to change over time by receptivity to feedback and incorporating that feedback into personal change. There would not be an absolute end point to this process, but rather an openness to continued growth.

The transdisciplinary aspect of addiction education also argues against academic leveling in the self-awareness dimension. For example, the Associate Human Services degree program referred to above placed as much emphasis on self-awareness (but not multicultural awareness) as did the Counseling Psychology Master's program. Programs will also vary by how much client contact students have while enrolled. The VA-MD-NC addiction educators agreed that supervised client work provides a significant area of growth and development for students. In some, but not all Associate programs, client contact is minimal and on-site supervision may be inadequate.

The focus of this discussion shifted from leveling self-awareness to educational climate and programmatic aspects supporting student development (i.e, availability of quality on-site supervision of students and admissions' selectivity at open-enrollment institutions). We plan to continue to look at program-embedded self-awareness and multicultural awareness to offer recommendations for academic addiction counseling training programs.

Contribute to the ongoing dialogue on this topic: log onto the Mid-ATTC's Addiction Exchange Forum at <http://www.mid-atcc.org> and post your opinions. Or, contact 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

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