

ALABAMA BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN COUNSELING (ABEC) AND COVID-19 CONCERNS

The sudden and ongoing crisis of the Coronavirus has created uncharted territory for all of us worldwide. The pandemic requires us to adapt to a changed and changing world and this certainly includes licensees of the ABEC, their clients and even several rules and regulations of the Board. This document is meant to address immediate concerns and hardships related to COVID-19.

DISTANCE COUNSELING

Continuity of care for clients is essential and abandonment is forbidden. Social distancing is also essential. Many licensees have turned to distance counseling as a solution. Please see section A. 12 of the Code of Ethics for guidance in the use of technology and “teletherapy”. One major concern is that many clients have had to move back to their home states outside of Alabama. Know that Alabama licensees may work with out-of-state clients **AS LONG AS THAT STATE APPROVES**. Alabama licensees **MUST** check with out-of-state counseling licensure boards to confirm that they are welcome to provide counseling services outside of Alabama. If not, assistance with appropriate referral should be made available. If distance counseling is not an option, please follow CDC and ADPH guidelines regarding COVID-19 to help prevent exposure and spreading of the virus.

CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

The ABEC is well aware that many training opportunities have been cancelled and there are currently fewer opportunities for live, interactive, real-time experiences. In response to this hardship:

- The ABEC is waiving the 75% Real-Time Participation in Continuing Education Activities requirement (**255-X-7-.01(e)**) for Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) for the 2020 renewal cycle. Further, if audited, LPCs will be allowed an extension to 12/31/20 to provide documentation of at least 40-hours of CE activity with 6-hours of ethics. LPCs **MUST** still renew their licenses before the July 31 deadline. The CE Policy and what is considered “acceptable” remains applicable. <http://abec.alabama.gov/PDFs/2019/CEPolicy10-19.pdf>
- The ABEC is waiving the 75% Real-Time Participation in Continuing Education Activities requirement (**255-X-7-.02(e)**) for Associate Licensed Counselors (ALC) renewing beginning 4/1/20 until the end of the year. Further, ALCs will be allowed an extension to 12/31/20 to provide documentation of at least 10-hours of CE activity with 2-hours of ethics. ALCs **MUST** still renew before the expiration date of their license. The CE Policy and what is considered “acceptable” remains applicable. <http://abec.alabama.gov/PDFs/2019/CEPolicy10-19.pdf>

FACE-TO-FACE SUPERVISION

Until the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer declared a Federal or State emergency, 100% of face-to-face supervision and 100% of “other” supervision may be conducted virtually.

NOTARY REQUIREMENTS

Until the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer declared a Federal or State emergency, required evidence of a Notary Public stamp on any ABEC document is waived.

ABEC OFFICE IMPLICATIONS REGARDING COVID-19

The ABEC office staff is doing all they can to make sure the office stays open during the COVID-19 crisis. Know that until the pandemic is declared over, the in-office staff will be very limited. Emails may be a more efficient way to communicate with staff than by phone. For now, the office is closed to anyone but staff. If you need to hand deliver anything please contact the Board office and make arrangements to do so.

Stay safe,

Anna Barksdale – Board Chair

Gary Williams – Executive Director