

MCCA November 2010 Legislative Update

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It has been a dramatic fall in the political arena whatever one's individual affiliation or perspective. The leadership at the federal and state levels has been significantly restructured and it remains to be seen how these changes may impact legislation in the next session and what if any action might mean to LCPCs. Certainly at the state level, with a new Governor and leadership in the House and Senate, talk of budget cuts certainly raises the potential for further reduction in Mainecare services or other funding sources that could impact LCPCs and their clients regardless of practice setting (i.e., private practice, community agency). It has been suggested that the national picture may be similarly impacted by the change in House leadership and the reorganization of the Senate with the further shift away from a single party majority. AMHCA and MCCA will continue to monitor these complex changes as they emerge and update our membership as events dictate.

MCCA has expressed its gratitude to Sen. Collins for co-sponsoring, and championing in subsequent committee hearings, legislation in the last session to remove the referral and supervision requirement for LMHCs (all federal legislation uses "LMHC" as a generic designation for the various clinical licenses for counselors across the country including our LCPC) under TRICARE. MCCA provided direct consultation with Sen. Collins' staff in support of her co-sponsorship. While implementation of that bill has some remaining concerns for AMHCA and MCCA leadership (e.g., CACREP program graduation requirement, specific exam requirements) it remains a move in the direction of full parity for LMHCs under TRICARE.

The Veterans Administration has, after significant delay and much "encouragement" from AMHCA, established a job qualification for LMHCs, which completes implementation of legislation passed three years ago, and permits LMHCs to apply for positions in the VA system at the GS-11 level (i.e., commensurate with LCSWs). Some postings specifically referencing LMHCs have already been noted.

AMHCA is preparing for a follow up effort as the Senate returns for the lame duck session to seek new co-sponsorship for S. 671 which specifically amends Medicare regulations to permit LMHCs to practice at the independent level of practice (i.e., on equal footing with our LCSW colleagues). AMHCA has specifically identified key states, including Maine and MCCA members as pivotal in lobbying Senators Collins and Snowe for their support given their respective leadership roles in the Senate, to champion that legislation that removes the final major hurdle to full independent practice status with Medicare.

MCCA will continue to rely on our members' energy and action (e.g., e-mails, calls, visits with district offices or directly with legislators) to make our voices heard. The data is clear; that effort works to shape what legislation emerges in Augusta or Washington. One personalized message that speaks to your experience and that of your clients' makes a difference. MCCA will be happy to provide information to help the membership in that effort (e.g., information sheets and talking points for meetings, letter templates), check our website for updates.