



## AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

June 23, 2010

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1714 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman McCollum:

I am writing on behalf of the American Counseling Association (ACA) to ask you to cosponsor two pieces of legislation which will improve access to mental health care for our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families. ACA applauds your membership in the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, and we are confident you understand the importance of providing high quality mental health services to this population.

ACA is the nation's largest non-profit membership organization representing mental health counselors. There are more than 115,000 licensed professional counselors across the U.S.—including Minnesota's Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs)—working in private practice and a variety of other settings as full-fledged mental health specialists. LPCCs are master's degreed, experienced mental professionals, ready to help meet the service needs of our nation's armed forces and their families. Two bills are pending in the House of Representatives which would update federal policies to make it easier for counselors to be enlisted in providing needed care.

H.R. 3839, bipartisan legislation introduced by Congressmen Tom Rooney and Michael McMahon, would help improve access to outpatient mental health services for TRICARE beneficiaries by removing the outdated physician referral and supervision requirement for services obtained by a licensed professional counselor. LPCCs meet education and training standards on par with—and in many states more stringent than—those of providers who have been allowed to see TRICARE beneficiaries without referral and supervision for many, many years. Americans with private health insurance can pick up the phone and make an appointment with a counselor directly; especially given the lingering stigma associated with mental health treatment, shouldn't servicemembers, retirees, and their families enjoy the same direct access to care? The House of Representatives has passed the language included in H.R. 3839 three times already, and should do so again to finally remove this impediment to prompt treatment.

H.R. 5385, bipartisan legislation introduced by Congressmen Chris Carney and Mark Kirk, would bolster counseling services provided to veterans at institutions of higher learning. The legislation directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a toll-free hotline to assist mental health professionals at such institutions, and to provide training to mental health professionals at colleges and universities. Veterans will benefit from having a more effective pool of providers supporting them in the community, and an additional source of support and treatment.

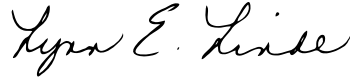
We urge you to cosponsor both of these bills. Our nation's servicemembers and their families are under incredible strain as a result of fighting wars on behalf of our nation in both Iraq and Afghanistan for

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several years. Enacting H.R. 3839 and H.R. 5385 is a small but concrete way Congressional Mental Health Caucus members can demonstrate their concern and commitment to providing them with the mental health supports and services they desperately need.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn E. Linde".

Lynn Linde  
President, American Counseling Association

cc: Minnesota Counseling Association

## TRICARE Participation Requirements for Master's-Degreed Mental Health Professionals (32 CFR 199.6)

	Licensed Mental Health Counselor	Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist	Licensed Clinical Social Worker
<b>Education:</b>	Minimum of a master's degree in mental health counseling or allied mental health field from a regionally accredited institution	Recognized graduate professional education with the minimum of an earned master's degree from a regionally accredited educational institution in an appropriate behavioral science field, mental health discipline	Has at least a master's degree in social work from a graduate school of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education
<b>Experience:</b>	Two years of post-masters experience which includes 3,000 hours of clinical work and 100 hours of face-to-face supervision	<p><b>(i)</b> Either 200 hours of approved supervision in the practice of marriage and family counseling, ordinarily to be completed in a 2- to 3-year period, of which at least 100 hours must be in individual supervision. This supervision will occur preferably with more than one supervisor and should include a continuous process of supervision with at least three cases; and <b>(ii)</b> 1,000 hours of clinical experience in the practice of marriage and family counseling under approved supervision, involving at least 50 different cases; <b>OR</b></p> <p><b>(iii)</b> 150 hours of approved supervision in the practice of psychotherapy, ordinarily to be completed in a 2- to 3-year period, of which at least 50 hours must be individual supervision; plus at least 50 hours of approved individual supervision in the practice of marriage and family counseling, ordinarily to be completed within a period of not less than 1 nor more than 2 years; and <b>(iv)</b> 750 hours of clinical experience in the practice of psychotherapy under approved supervision involving at least 30 cases; plus at least 250 hours of clinical practice in marriage and family counseling under approved supervision, involving at least 20 cases</p>	Has had a minimum of 2 years or 3,000 hours of post-master's degree supervised clinical social work practice under the supervision of a master's level social worker in an appropriate clinical setting, as determined by the Director, OCHAMPUS, or a designee
<b>Licensure requirement:</b>	Is licensed or certified to practice as a mental health counselor by the jurisdiction where practicing	Is licensed or certified to practice as a marriage and family therapist by the jurisdiction where practicing	Is licensed or certified as a clinical social worker by the jurisdiction where practicing; or, if the jurisdiction does not provide for licensure or certification of clinical social workers, is certified by a national professional organization offering certification of clinical social workers

<b>Profession licensed in all 50 states?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Total # of U.S. licensees</b>	115,378	53,389	197,217
<b>Allowed to practice independently under state law?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Allowed to practice independently in TRICARE?</b>	<b>No</b>	<i>Yes, since 1991</i>	<i>Yes, since 1983</i>

*For more information contact Scott Barstow, American Counseling Association, 703-823-9800 x234, email: sbarstow@counseling.org*