



Fall 2009 News-On-The-Run

Congratulations on being a member of the Texas Mental Health Counselors Association. You'll find us a valuable resource for straight-talk information about everything related to building and maintaining a rewarding private counseling practice in Texas. We hope you enjoy what you find here!

Barry Blackman, MA, LPC-S
TMHCA President

Recognize the "private" practitioner?

by Marty Jeane, PhD, LPC-S, LMFT

Have you ever noticed how reclusive a counselor in private practice can become? You study hard all those years to get your degree, at times a lonely pursuit. You do your practicum and internship, fortunately in consultation with a supervisor. You start seeing clients. You keep all their secrets. You don't talk to anyone without a release. You hide and lock away your notes. You stay in your therapy room all day as people disclose their deepest secrets to you. You are the secret keeper. You don't share the details of one hour to the next. That hour has a new set of secrets. You don't go home and tell about the people you saw that day. You keep it to yourself.

You *can* talk with your billing & collections business associate, so long as you have a HIPAA agreement with them...never discussing more than you have to, of course. But most counselors do billing themselves. They alone call the insurance companies about a denied payment. They alone do their scheduling. They alone do their own billing. They write their own consent-to-treat forms. It's a "solo" practice for most counselors in Texas...most do their work alone.

Working alone can be detrimental to your own mental and emotional health. We get cut off from "relatively" healthy folks and deal with folks in crisis. Often counselors who make privacy such a necessary feature of life begin to cut themselves off from others. Many counselors seemingly don't know how to "play well with others." I've known a lot of counselors over the years who suffered from being alone.

Of course, many self-nurturing activities are available to you. We just have to *deliberately* involve ourselves in relationships which are good for us. One of these is involvement in professional organizations like TCA and TMHCA. You will find "relatively" healthy folks here. You sure will find a lot of professionals who understand what you deal with on a day to day basis. They've made decisions *you* have to make, and made mistakes *you've* made as well. I've found TMHCA a great source of encouragement, professional challenge, and focus...and a wonderful source of friendship and fun.

I hope you'll involve yourself in your professional organizations. Be on a committee. Run for office. Give back to the profession where you do what you love. Don't let yourself to be a "private" practitioner.

Marty Jeane, PhD, LPC-S, LMFT, is Executive Director of Center Street Counseling Services in Mansfield, TX. He's been an LPC since 1982 and tries to avoid being a "private" practitioner by being TMHCA's acting Immediate Past President.

Look For Your Certificate In The Mail

When you join or renew your TMHCA membership, you will receive a beautiful membership certificate in the mail. Members will find they will

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New Certificates

Lend a Hand

want to post this document with pride. This is a great way to let your clients and associates know you are a part of THE major organization fighting for your practice rights as a professional counselor in the State of Texas. Display this handsome certificate with satisfaction.

Would you volunteer at the TMHCA booth?

Would you spend a few hours during TCA's Professional Growth Conference volunteering at the TMHCA booth? We need several people from Wednesday evening, November 11, until the afternoon of Friday the 13th to greet people who come by the booth. No extensive experience is required. You will get to meet some of TMHCA's "legendary" members who will be working there and stopping by. A little known secret about the TMHCA booth is that at the TCA conference, this is the place to meet the real movers and shakers in the counseling field in the state of Texas. If you are interested, please contact our President, Barry Blackman at:

TMHCA.President@gmail.com

Come join us. Smiling faces are welcome to apply.

Come to the Party!

Please come to our reception at the annual TCA Growth Conference in Dallas on Thursday evening at 5:30 on November 12th. We, in cooperation with the Texas Association of Marriage & Family Therapists, are hosting with light hors d'oeuvres and cash bar. Many of the Texas LPC and LMFT Board members should be in attendance. Here is your chance to get to know the people who actually make decisions about our licenses, reconnect with your old friends, or make new ones. Stop by the TMHCA booth for specific directions and information.

Legislative Update

The 2009 Texas legislative session produced some progress in state support for mental health services. Here's a quick summary of those passed & approved by the Governor:

Senate Bill 1 – Allocated \$109.4 million for community mental health crises services to help keep patients in crisis out of hospitals and the criminal justice system. **Senate Bill 584** – Prevents state hospitals and residential care facilities for the mentally retarded from depleting trust funds intended for residents' support. **House Bill 888** – Extends the deadline for preliminary mental health exam of a person from Noon until 4 p.m. on the 1st succeeding business day following a 48-hour detention period which ended on a Saturday, Sunday, or before 4 p.m. on the 1st day thereafter. **House Bill 2196** – Established a workgroup to make recommendations about integration of medical services and behavioral health services. **House Bill 4276** – Requires the treating facility to create a transportation plan for a patient receiving court-ordered mental health services who is scheduled to be released.

On the national scene, Department of Health & Human Services is at last nearly ready to release rules enabling the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. Though passed by Congress & signed by the President more than a year ago, it hasn't been implemented for lack of rules. HHS says it now expects to release rules before January 1, 2010. This legislation requires group health plans to offer the same limits for mental health & substance-abuse treatments as they do for medical and surgical coverage.

Come 2 the Party

Legislative News