

SUNCOAST MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

BYLAWS

Approved: January 16, 2015

Article I Name and Purpose

Section 1. Name

This association will be known as the “Suncoast Mental Health Counselors Association,” hereafter referred to as SMHCA.

Section 2. Affiliation

This association is the District III affiliate of the Florida Mental Health Counselors Association (FMHCA), and is recognized by FMHCA as the association to represent mental health counselors in Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas and Sumter counties consistent with the Purposes as set forth in Article I, Section 3. Both FMHCA and SMHCA are independent and autonomous professional associations.

Section 3. Purpose

The purpose of SMHCA is to provide a means for mental health counselors in District III of the Florida Mental Health Counselors Association, working as a chapter of the organization, to do the following:

- Provide a system for the exchange of professional information among mental health counselors through electronic and printed media.
- Provide professional development programs for mental health counselors to update and enhance clinical competencies.
- Promote legislation that recognizes and advances the profession of mental health counseling.
- Provide a public forum for mental health counselors and other mental health practitioners in all work settings to enhance the profession of mental health counseling.
- Promote positive relations with mental health counselors and other mental health practitioners in all work settings to enhance the profession of mental health counseling.
- Contribute to the establishment and maintenance of minimal training standards for mental health counselors.
- Promote scientific research and inquiry into mental health concerns.

- Coordinate with other professional organizations to promote the advancement of the mental health profession.
- Provide the public with information concerning the competencies and professional services of mental health counselors.
- Contribute to the understanding of multicultural issues in counseling.

Article II Membership, Dues and Ethics

Membership application to SMHCA shall be made on forms provided by SMHCA, accompanied by the appropriate fee. Resignation may be made via written or verbal contact with the President or will be assumed if dues are unpaid three months after the renewal deadline.

Section 1. Classes of Membership

A. Professional member

1. Licensed Mental Health Counselor Member

Must possess a current Florida Mental Health Counselor license and be in good standing with the State of Florida. Privileges include full voting rights, participation in all activities, eligibility for office and chairing a committee.

2. General Member

Must possess a minimum of a master's degree in human services; may be unlicensed or licensed in another related mental health profession; work or previously worked in a clinical or educational setting. Privileges include full voting rights, participation in all activities, eligibility for non-elected office and chairing a committee.

B. Student Member

Must be currently engaged in a graduate program leading to a masters or doctoral degree in counseling or a related field. Privileges include voting rights and participation in all activities and committees; exclusions include holding elected office and chairing a committee.

Section 2. Dues

Annual dues fee structure shall be set by the Board of Directors. Dues statements will be mailed or sent electronically. A three-month delinquency will result in deletion from the membership roster.

Section 3. Code of Ethics

Members are expected to abide by the *American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) Code of Ethics*. Licensed mental health professionals must abide by the regulations published by the State of Florida governing 491 licensees in the state and the Administrative Code Rules set by the Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapists and Mental Health Counselors.

Section 4. Termination of Membership

A. Resignation

Resignation may be made via written or verbal contact with the President or will be assumed if dues are unpaid three months after the renewal deadline.

B. Severance

A membership may be terminated by a 2/3 vote of the Board of Directors. An individual's membership may be terminated for conduct that is determined by the Board to injure the Association, the reputation of the Association or is in violation of the Association's Bylaws or Code of Ethics. A member charged with conduct that may result in termination of membership may present evidence to the Board in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days of their receipt of the allegation and request a hearing by the Board. Failure to respond to an allegation within fourteen (14) days will result in termination of membership. The decision of the Board may be appealed in writing within fourteen (14) days of a determination.

Article III Elections

Section 1. Ballots

The officers of SMHCA shall be elected by signed or electronic ballot received by the designated date. The nomination process will begin in March and culminate at the June elections meeting, at which time the officers will be installed. Ties will be decided by another ballot. Officers will serve until the June meeting at the end of their term.

Section 2. Nominations

The Nominating Committee shall be composed of three members appointed by the President and approved by the Board: a Chair, a member of the Board, and one member from the membership at large.

The duties of the Nominating Committee shall include securing validation of eligibility and consent of nominees for each office and presenting a slate of prepared candidates by the April general meeting. The Nominating Committee shall establish policies and procedures to ensure that only ballots returned by SMHCA members will be counted.

The Nominating Committee shall begin accepting nominations for office beginning with the January general meeting and ending with the April general meeting. Written announcement of one's desire to service in a specific office will be accepted.

Section 3. Vacancies

Vacancies in any office, except that of President, shall be appointed and approved by the Board for the unexpired term.

Article IV Meetings

Section 1. Annual Membership Meeting

The June meeting will be designated the Annual Membership Meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the President or five members of the Board. Written notice of the agenda, time, and location of the special meeting must be delivered to each Board member no less than five days prior to the meetings.

Section 3. Quorum

Three of five elected officers and one-half (50%) of vote-eligible Board members attending a general meeting will constitute a quorum.

Section 4. Member Attendance

General members in good standing are invited to attend Board meetings at any time without a vote, unless also serving as a committee Chair.

Article V Board of Directors

Section 1. Composition

Voting members of the Board of Directors (Board) shall be composed of the President, President-Elect, Past-President, Secretary, Treasurer, all standing committee chairpersons and appointed Board members.

Section 2. Meetings

The Board shall meet at least five times per year. Board members must attend 2/3 of all meetings, or be subject to replacement. Meetings shall be scheduled by the President or by written requests of three members of the Board.

Section 3. Duties and Responsibilities

The Board will conduct and manage the business of the Association in accordance with these Bylaws. The Board may engage the services of an independent contractor as needed. No policy decisions may be delegated to any other entity.

The Board is empowered to approve and disapprove membership applications, appoint and remove committee chairs, appoint members to office if a vacancy occurs, approve and disapprove expenditures, approve and disapprove projects, and undertake other actions for the organization that are not contrary to the Bylaws.

Section 4. Appointment and Discharge

Committee chairs must be approved by a majority of a quorum of the Board. Board members may resign by submitting written notice of intent 30 days prior to resignation. Any member can be discharged from the Board (office or other) by a majority of a quorum of the Board.

Section 5. Expenses

Expenses of \$500 or more other than those in the approved budget must be presented to the Board and approved by the majority of a Board quorum. Expenses under \$500 other than those in the approved budget may be approved by both the President and Treasurer without Board approval.

Article VI. Elected Officers Descriptions & Duties

Section 1. Elected Officers

The elected officers of SMHCA shall be President, President-Elect, Past-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers will be elected by ballot and installed during the June annual membership and election meeting. Officers will be members of FMHCA and encouraged to be members of AMHCA.

A. President

1. Qualifications: Professional LMHC member of SMHCA, active member of SMHCA for at least one year, reside or work in District III of FMHCA
2. Term: One year
3. Duties:
 - a. Preside at SMHCA Board meetings
 - b. Serve as ex-officio member of all committees
 - c. Appoint a Chairperson for each Standing Committee, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, thereafter, within 60 days of the June election meeting
 - d. Appoint special committees as needed
 - e. Perform other duties as necessary and appropriate to the office of President including meeting agenda preparation

B. President-Elect

1. Qualifications: Professional LMHC member of SMHCA, active member of SMHCA for at least one year, reside or work in District III of FMHCA
2. Term: One year
3. Duties:
 - a. Assume Presidential duties in the absence of the President
 - b. Become President for the unexpired term should a vacancy occur in the office of the President

- c. Become President when current President's term expires
- d. Assume other responsibilities as decided by the Board of Directors

C. Secretary

1. Qualifications: Professional LMHC member of SMHCA, active member of SMHCA for at least one year, reside or work in District III of FMHCA
2. Term: One year
3. Duties:
 - a. Maintain an attendance record of all SMHCA general and Board meetings
 - b. Record minutes of all SMHCA general and Board meetings, and distribute promptly to Board Members
 - c. Prepare correspondence of SMHCA as directed by the President or by the Board of Directors

D. Treasurer

1. Qualifications: Professional LMHC member of SMHCA, active member of SMHCA for at least one year, reside or work in District III of FMHCA
2. Term: One year
3. Duties:
 - a. Receive and deposit all SMHCA funds
 - b. Disburse, by check, funds authorized by the President or Board
 - c. Close annual Association books as of the June election
 - d. Submit records to the Board of Directors monthly or as requested
 - e. Be responsible for any correspondence related to federal or state tax law
 - f. Chair the Finance Committee

E. Past-President

1. Term: One year post-completion of Office of President
2. Duties: Serve as advisor to the President and Board of Directors

Section 2. Appointed Board Members

Additional Board members will be appointed as needed and be current members of the Association appointed by the President and approved by the majority of a quorum of the Board to serve a term of one year

A. Parliamentarian – nonvoting

The Parliamentarian will serve as an advisor to the President and the Board regarding parliamentary procedures and be responsible for ensuring meetings follow the process outlined by "Robert's Rules of Order."

B. Graduate Student Representative – voting

A current student member enrolled in a graduate Mental Health Counselor Program. The Graduate Student Representative will serve on the Membership Committee and be a liaison between SMHCA and the Universities and their students.

D. Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern Representative – voting

A current Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern. The Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern Representative will serve on the Membership Committee and be a liaison between SMHCA and the Registered Mental Health Counselor Interns.

E. Counselor Educator Representative – voting

A Counselor Educator on the faculty of a Graduate Mental Health Counselor Program. The Counselor Educator Representative will serve on the Membership Committee and function as a liaison to the Board with regard to the current concerns of graduate school mental health counselor faculty.

F. Two Members “At Large” as appointed by the President – voting

The two “At Large” Board members shall be members in good standing with interest and willingness to further the organization’s purpose.

G. Committee Chairpersons

All Standing Committee Chairs serve on the Board and have voting privileges as members of the Board.

Article VII Standing and Special Committees

Section 1. Standing Committees

A. Legislative

Informs and enlists the support of the Board and membership regarding key legislation and political activity related to mental health counseling. The committee will act as a liaison between SMHCA, FMHCA, and its lobbyists in the identification and action on laws, programs and practices affecting the practice of mental health counseling.

B. Professional Development

Assesses the professional development needs of the membership and plans, coordinates, and ensures the presentation of workshops and the provision of CEUs.

C. Membership

Actively promotes SMHCA and FMHCA membership. Members will include the Counselor Educator Representative, the Registered Intern Representative, the Graduate Student Representative, and other members as appointed by the Chair and/or the President.

D. Public and Community Relations

Promotes all Association events using appropriate advertisement media including social networking sites. Works closely with the Board and all Committee Chairpersons to relay their interests and concerns to the members and the public as appropriate. The Committee will promote understanding and positioning of mental health counseling to the public, third party payers, employers, and other professionals.

E. Finance

Chaired by the Treasurer. Prepares a budget for the upcoming fiscal year and presents it to the Board for approval at the first meeting of the fiscal year. The Committee

produces monthly reports and for the end of the year to provide the Board with an accounting of income and expenditures. They may submit revisions to the approved budget as it becomes necessary or expedient.

F. Nominations

All Committee members are appointed by the President and approved by the Board. See Article III.

- G. All Standing Committee Chairs serve on the Board and have voting privileges. Chairpersons are appointed by 2/3 vote of the Board. Each committee may have as many members as desired. Consultants from the general public may be engaged to assist the committees, but will not be formal members of the committee. The Committee Chair with the approval of the President may fill a vacancy on any Standing Committee.

Section 2. Special Committees

The President may create Special Committees as issues of concern arise. The role and purpose of Special Committees will be determined in consultation with the Board.

A. Military Interests

Directs the attention of SMHCA members to the needs of veterans, their families and other military personnel, especially those whose active duty included service in combat zones. The committee will also provide members with information on governmental programs that provide opportunities for service to this population.

Article VII Representation

Amendment of the Bylaws can be requested by any voting member at any General Membership Meeting or Board meeting or by written recommendations to the Board. The request must then be discussed at the next General Meeting. If a majority of the Board of Directors present at that meeting vote (provided a quorum is present) favor pursuing the change, announcements will be mailed or emailed to each chapter member to the effect that a vote will be held at the next General Meeting following the announcement. Given a quorum, a 2/3 vote of the membership present will be sufficient to accomplish the amendment. The Bylaws may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the Board to be in compliance with FMHCA Governance Committee's recommendations for local chapters.