

# THE COUNSELING ADVOCATE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE OHIO COUNSELING ASSOCIATION'S  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE



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## PREP FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY

*BRING LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY TO LIFE IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION CLASSROOMS*

The landscape of professional counseling and counselor education is ever-changing as we navigate the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. However, one important feature of the counseling profession remains the same.

**Professional advocacy is necessary for the health of the counseling field AND the health of the clients we serve.** Members of the OCA Government Relations Committee (GRC) realize legislative advocacy can feel intimidating and intangible for the average counselor education student. Thus, we hope to support counselor educators and all others who directly impact beginning professional counselors to engage in professional advocacy in promoting knowledge, skills, and awareness regarding legislative advocacy in counseling.

Dr. Stephanie Drcar, OACES representative to the GRC and faculty member at Cleveland State University, shared suggestions for incorporating legislative advocacy issues into counselor education. *(See page 3 for details).* The GRC agrees with Dr. Drcar when she said, "Legislative advocacy topics should not be relegated to professional issues class but rather they have a home across most courses." Her suggestions will pique student interest and should be supplemented with clear guidance for students to involve themselves in the OCA Government Relations Committee work. This includes encouraging students to attend Legislative Advocacy Day, providing resources for contacting their OCA Chapter GRC liaison to request information on how to get involved, and promoting their engagement with this newsletter. As editor of *The Counseling Advocate*, I am all in for the latter!

OHIO COUNSELING  
ASSOCIATION

## HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY? SHARE IT IN THE ADVOCATE!

Contact the editor:

**Maddie Stevens:**  
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Thank you for your continued support of the OCA GRC and your engagement with this newsletter.

-Maddie Stevens, PhD, LPC, NCC,  
Editor & GRC Member At-Large

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

- **Senate Bill 204: Interstate Compact for Licensure Portability**

- Bill status: Introduced

- **House Bill 122: Telehealth Expansion**

- OCA continues to support the bill. It passed the Ohio House and we expect the bill to get a hearing in the Senate after summer recess.
- [Learn more here.](#)

- **House Bill 203 / Senate Bill 131: Universal Licensing**

- OCA will continue to oppose these bills and universal licensure.

- **Counselor Trainee (CT) Status - COVID-19 Extension:**

- The Ohio state budget included a provision to extend the CT status to up to 6 months.

- **Telehealth Emergency Rules - COVID-19 Extension:**

- The OCSWMFT board voted to temporarily suspend enforcement of certain provisions of OAC Rule 4757-5, which regulates Ohio counselors' telehealth practices.
- The extension will expire on Friday September 24 2021.
- [Learn more here.](#)

- **Medical Conscience Amendment**

- Approved in the budget and signed into law. OCA will continue to advocate in opposition of the implementation of the Medical Conscience Amendment
- See Page 3 for more information about this issue.

- **Parity @ 10 Coalition:**

- This coalition seeks to eliminate discriminatory insurance coverage for clients with mental health and substance use disorders. The goal is to improve access to mental health care.
- OCA continues to be active in the Parity @ 10 coalition.
- [Learn more here.](#)

- **Crisis Response:**

- Ohio state judicial and law enforcement working to integrate mental health knowledge into their training and activities.

- **OCSWMFT Training Supervision Issue:**

- Sean Gorby, Stephanie Drcar, and Savannah Long conducted survey research exploring the ease of access to training supervision. Dr. Gorby presented the result to the OCSWMFT board.
- The board took no further action to enact their previous decision to outsource 50 hours of training supervision for counselors.

## NEW INFO: ACA INTERSTATE COMPACT BILL

**A Brief Refresher:** The American Counseling Association has developed a Counseling Interstate Compact (Senate Bill 204), which will provide a pathway for licensees to move seamlessly from one state to another. This would be achieved via an agreement among states to recognize another state's professional counseling license. In the past, proposed licensure portability solutions have posed a great threat of allowing counselors from other states to practice in Ohio with potentially different training requirements and previous practice standards. The OCA GRC is actively engaged in the discussion regarding the newly-proposed ACA Interstate Compact bill and is eager for Ohio counselors' input on the topic.

[You can read more about the bill here, in the most recent issue of \*The Counseling Advocate\*.](#)



**OCA's goal is for Ohio to become one of the first 10 states to enact the compact. This would provide Ohio counselors with a seat at the table where regulations will be crafted regarding the compact. OCA will present proponent testimony on SB 204.**

### NEW DETAILS:

On Saturday, May 22, 2021, the OCA Executive Council voted to support legislation that would enter Ohio into the Counseling Interstate Compact. OCA identified a sponsor for the bill, and on June 28, 2021, Senator Kristina Roegner (Dist. 27) introduced SB 204. This bill has not been referred to a committee yet, but it will likely be referred to the Senate Health Committee. This committee has already passed several licensure compacts this year, which gives the OCA GRC hope for SB 204. When the legislature returns from summer recess in September, we expect the bill to receive hearings.

### JOIN THE CONVERSATION:

OCA members are invited to engage in discussion regarding the Interstate Compact. Please join us during one of two GRC Town Hall Meetings, via Zoom:

**Town Hall 1:** Wednesday August 18, 12:30-1:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://capital.zoom.us/j/93325439245>

**Town Hall 2 :** Friday, September 17, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://capital.zoom.us/j/94763625888>

## OCA LEADERSHIP UPDATES.

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Refer to this contact list to get in touch with a government relations liaison. Contact Sean Gorby or Ellie Raghavan to join the OCA GRC.



## INCORPORATING LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY INTO THE CLASSROOM:

### *Practical Suggestions for Counselor Educators*

by Dr. Stephanie Drcar, OACES Representative  
(continued from Page 1)

**Ohio House Bill 33.** Ohio House Bill 33 went into effect on April 12, 2021 and requires counselors (among others) to report animal abuse.

**Classroom activity for internship course.** As a small group, discuss the following questions (which will require students to discuss with their internship site supervisor ahead of the classroom discussion):

- 1) Was your internship site supervisor aware of this new law?;
- 2) How did you and your supervisor learn about this law and what does this tell you about the dissemination of vital legislative information?;
- 3) How prepared are you and your supervisor for assessing for and reporting animal abuse?;
- 4) What are the clinical implications for this new reporting requirement?

**Medical Conscience Clause.** The Ohio legislature passed and Governor DeWine signed into law the 2022-2023 Ohio budget in July 2021. The budget included a so-called medical conscience clause that allows health care service providers to refuse service provision if it violates their moral or religious beliefs.

**Classroom activity for a multicultural course.** Break students into small groups and assign a question for each group:

- 1) What other states hold similar laws and what role did ACA and state-level counseling organizations play in the debate?
- 2) What action(s) did Ohio professional counselor organizations take in response to this proposed law prior to passage?
- 3) What client populations is this law most likely to impact in Ohio and why?
- 4) How does this law intersect with the ACA Ethical Code?

Allow each group to use class time to determine answers to these questions and then share their findings with the class. As a whole class, discuss the question of: "How are issues related to power and representation relevant in the development and passage of this law?"

**ACA Interstate Compact.** Interstate compacts increase counselor licensure portability, and OCA supports Ohio's joining of the currently proposed interstate compact.

**Classroom activity for a professional issues course.** Ask students to complete a brief pre-class activity that involves answering the following questions:

- 1) If you were, or plan, to move to another state and practice as a counselor, what is the process of transferring an Ohio license to that state?
- 2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an Ohio license regarding eligibility in other states?

In the classroom, ask students to share their findings and then explore the following questions after the professor provides a brief summary of the proposed interstate compact:

- 1) How would this interstate compact impact you?
- 2) How does the interstate compact impact clients?
- 3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of this interstate compact compared to the current system and compared to so-called universal licensure laws?

## VACANT GRC POSITIONS: *Must be filled immediately!*

- EOCA GRC Representative
- MVCA GRC Representative
- NWOCA GRC Representative
- OASGW GRC Representative
- Coalition for Healthy Communities GRC Liaison
- Mental Health Providers Coalition GRC Liaison
- OCA's Political Action Committee (PAC) Members and Liaison



## EXPLAINED: MEDICAL CONSCIENCE AMENDMENT

*Governor DeWine signed Ohio's state budget bill, which included a clause regarding healthcare providers' "medical conscience." This amendment allows healthcare providers to refuse certain treatments to clients based on providers' moral beliefs. Implications of this practice may include discrimination against clients in minority groups.*

*Although OCA GRC lobbied against the Medical Conscience Amendment, the law goes into effect on September 29, 2021. Future challenges to this law will be legal in nature.*

Note: Despite the effect date of this clause in Ohio law, Ohio's counselors must remember our ethical duty. The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) prohibits discriminatory behavior against clients and calls us to provide treatment in clients' best interests, regardless of personal bias.