

THE COUNSELING ADVOCATE

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



IN THIS ISSUE:

- LETTER FROM THE CHAIR
- LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY 2020 UPDATE
- LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
- MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS
- HOW TO HELP DURING COVID-19 CRISIS
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES
- OCA GRC CONTACTS



SHARE YOUR VOICE IN THE COUNSELING ADVOCATE!

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A MESSAGE FROM SEAN GORBY, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS CHAIR

Right now, our world is in a time of crisis. Perhaps you have heard the phrase, "Look for the helpers." This statement was used by Fred Rogers of "Mister Roger's Neighborhood" to encourage his show's viewers and focus attention on humanity's ability to do good, no matter how scary or dark the circumstances may become. Counselors are part of the good. **YOU ARE THE HELPERS!**

Counselors have social responsibilities. One of them is to advocate for clients' rights and ensure access to services. Now, more than ever, you have stepped up to the plate, engaged creatively, and found ways to uphold these responsibilities. As many of you shift to the teletherapy format, you are remaining flexible as you find that this service engages clients slightly differently and comes with specific legal and ethical principles. Previous best practices may no longer be possible, and we must ensure that we are engaging in the ever-changing best practices that are becoming available under the given circumstances. I am encouraged as I see you embrace this transition while still upholding those principles. The OCA Government Relations Committee (GRC) is committed to ensuring that emergency concessions are put in place that allow you to engage in best practices under the declared state of emergency.

If you have questions about what is legally permitted in teletherapy in Ohio, reach out to the GRC (contact information for members is below). You may also visit ohiocounseling.org for up-to-date information. *You are not alone; we would love to be the helper to you!* Throughout this process, continue engaging beneficence and fidelity in all your work. But above all else, remain kind, act in love, and support one another, both in counseling and through the profession. Our greatest strength, as a profession and as the human race, is our ability to come together, support one another, and do good in times of crisis. Be the good. **BE THE HELPERS!**

Peace be the journey,
Dr. Sean Gorby

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY 2020: CANCELLED!

We are looking forward to connecting with you at Legislative Advocacy Day 2021!

Please stay up to date on the latest in teletherapy regulations, COVID-19, and advocacy initiatives on the homepage of www.ohiocounseling.org.

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



On Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2020, Sean Gorby and Sarah Vretas attended the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee hearing on behalf of OCA. Sean provided interested party testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 246 that would grant reciprocity to out-of-state counselor license holders. Sean questioned whether the legislation was appropriate for the industry: "While we are sure this could be an easy license transfer for other professions, it could prove harmful to the successful diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders for citizens of Ohio who seek our services." He said, "This is largely due to the lack of parity between states regarding licensed counselors' scope of practice and educational and training standards." OCA continues to monitor the progress of SB 246

COVID-19: ISSUES UPDATE

House Bill 580

- Mandates insurance providers to reimburse for teletherapy conducted during a declared state of emergency at the same rate and for the same reasons as they would in-person therapy services.
- Bill Status: Introduced

Rule 5160-1-21: Medicaid Telehealth Guidelines

- Issued by the Ohio Department of Medicaid to apply to ORC 5160 and work with Medicaid clients ONLY,
- The original requirement of providers to conduct the first visit with Medicaid patients in a face-to-face setting is suspended, effective 3/20/2020. Providers may use telehealth with new and existing patients during a state of emergency.
- Bill Status: Enacted

Rule 5122-29-31: Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Video Conferencing Guidelines

- Expands access to medical and behavioral health services using telehealth.
- Bill Status: Enacted

House Bill 197

- License expiration enforcement waived: Professional counseling licenses will remain valid until December 1, 2020, or 90 days following the expiration of the emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D (whichever is sooner), if the license would otherwise expire during the emergency.
- For graduating school counselors in training: Created a 1-year provisional license for ANY candidate, in ANY program for which a license is issued by the state Board of Education, that fulfills all program requirements EXCEPT for passing the required Ohio Assessment for Educators. The provisional license will be valid until July 1, 2021. Prior to July 1, 2021 the candidate must pass the required OAE in order to receive their regular/normally granted license.
- Bill Status: Enacted

PARITY BILL TESTIMONY

THANKS TO SEAN AND SARAH!



Sarah is one of two 2019-2020 OCA Emerging Leaders working with the Government Relations Committee. She is from Waynesburg, Ohio, and graduated with her bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University in 2017. Currently, Sarah is a master's student in the school counseling and clinical counseling programs at Capital University.

As an Emerging Leader, she is hoping to gain more experience working with legislators while gaining a greater understanding of how to effectively advocate for her future clients. A few of her current areas of interest include healthy relationships and sex education, gender and sexuality issues, and utilizing creative techniques in therapy. In her free time, Sarah enjoys cooking, running, and practicing yoga.



SARAH VRETAS: OCA EMERGING LEADER

The OCA Emerging Leaders Program is a year-long continuing education series to prepare counselor candidates and new counselors with the skills and knowledge to be leaders of the OCA.



MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Savannah is one of two 2019-2020 OCA Emerging Leaders working with the Government Relations Committee. She is from Clyde, Ohio, and received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Bowling Green State University in 2017. Savannah is currently pursuing her Master's degree at Heidelberg University in school and clinical mental health counseling.

As one of the OCA Emerging Leaders, she is interested in working with the Government Relations Committee to not only support and advocate for current issues, but to learn how to be the best advocate for future clients. A few of Savannah's areas of interest include rural counseling, infant and early childhood mental health, and community-based research. In her spare time, Savannah enjoys coaching volleyball and painting.



SAVANNAH LONG: **OCA EMERGING LEADER**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

The FREE six session [Telebehavioral Health Training and Technical Assistance Series](#) provides you with information and tools to implement a telebehavioral health program

Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA)

Access this [FREE guide](#) to understand the benefits and details involved in implementing college counseling from a distance.

American Counseling Association (ACA) Telebehavioral Health and Online Education Trainings

These trainings help you understand legal and ethical issues as well as best practices related to teletherapy and online education. Fees are associated with these trainings, and CEs are provided..

- [Demystifying Ethics and Law for Telebehavioral Health](#)
- [Counselor Risk Management: Counselors and Technology – A Two-Edged Sword](#)
- [Distance Counseling, HITECH, and HIPAA: Navigating Compliance, the Law, and Ethics](#)
- [Ethical Issues Related to the Practice of Online Clinical Supervision](#)
- [An APPLE a Day Keeps the Lawsuits at Bay.](#)
- [Like It or Not, Online Education Is Here to Stay: Best Practices for Online Teaching](#)

We've compiled a list of webinars and trainings to support your professional development during this time.

ENHANCE YOUR EXPERTISE.

LEND A HELPING HAND.

Check out this list of organizations needing your support now more than ever! Give where you can, and lift each other up.

Food Insecurity

Support kids affected by school closures at [nokidhungry.com](#).

Crisis Intervention

Volunteer as a crisis counselor with the [Crisis Text Line](#) or [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#).

People without Homes

Donate to the pandemic emergency fund, operated by the [Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio \(COHHIO\)](#).

Locate a support organization for veterans in Ohio using the [National Coalition for Homeless Veterans](#) and donate your time or energy.

Donate Blood

Blood drives across the nation have been cancelled to adhere to social distancing. Locate your local chapter of the [American Red Cross](#), and make an appointment to donate.

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QUESTIONS ABOUT LEGISLATION?

Contact your OCA GRC Rep!