

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the Addiction Counselor Education Program**

### **When should I begin the application process?**

The Addiction Counselor Education (ACE) program begins in September at the Westfield location and March at the Pittsfield location. You may begin the application process at any time during the year, however it is best to begin the application process early to allow enough time for an interview and to request that any transcripts be sent from previous educational institutions.

### **When is it too late to apply?**

It is too late to apply once the class begins or the class is full, whichever happens first. Please call the office at (413) 572-8033 to confirm that there is still space in the class if you are interested in a last minute application.

### **The program states that it meets “nights and weekends”. Is there a choice?**

No. In the Westfield program, first semester courses will take place on Saturdays and second semester courses will take place primarily on Wednesday evenings. The second semester is also when most students will complete their 300 hour practicum. The practicum has to be arranged to suit your schedule and the needs of the agency where you find placement so it may be nights, days, weekends or weekdays, whatever you arrange with the practicum site. To prepare you for the practicum, there is a required workshop called the Pre-practicum that meets just before the start of the practicum. You will know about it ahead of time so that you are able to make arrangements to take time off from work, if necessary. There will also be a Practicum Supervision/Ethics course that runs concurrently with your Practicum that meets every two weeks on either a Thursday evening or Saturday morning, student's choice.

Pittsfield location classes for both semesters (including Pre-Practicum and Practicum Supervision/Ethics) will take place only on Saturdays.

### **What is the cost of the program?**

The total cost, including registration, tuition, books, and fees is \$3900. Payment plans are available for those students paying out of pocket.

### **How long does it take to complete the program?**

The program is designed to be completed in two semesters. The Westfield program will start in September and go through May. The Pittsfield program will start in March and go through November.

**How do I get financial aid?**

Unfortunately, traditional financial aid does not apply to this program because it is a non-credit program. Some of our students receive support from agencies such as the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, MassHire, or Soldier On depending on their eligibility for aid. Otherwise, students should view the financing information on the link “Financing Your ACE Program” for tips on where to seek financial assistance.

**I have been awarded financial aid for the day school (or CGCE). Can I use it for ACE?**

No, because unlike the day school or CGCE, the ACE program is not a degree program. It is also not a full time program and most financial aid requires that the student attend school full time.

**Do students get help finding a Practicum placement?**

Yes, during the first semester you will talk about it in class. Our instructors are familiar with local agencies so they can offer guidance. You will need to think about what population you would like to work with—factors such as youth or adults, men or women, dual diagnosis or alcohol. The Community Education Office will provide you with letters of introduction and the Director will be working with all students to offer assistance.

**What about job placement after you finish the program?**

Some students have been offered positions with the agency where they completed a practicum, but this is not typical and is not to be expected. Almost every person who wants a job will find one in this growing field. Agencies often contact our program director when they have an open position, and she will contact graduates who are looking for positions. It is a good idea to keep in touch with the ACE program director or the Community Education Office when looking for employment opportunities, either before or after completing the ACE Program.

**I've already taken a course in Addictions at another college. Can I receive credit for it so I don't have to take it over again?**

You may speak to the director about your individual case, but generally we find that the curriculum is not close enough to ours to qualify for credit.

**Will I be certified upon completion of the Addiction Counselor Education Program?**

You will have obtained a Certificate upon completing the ACE program. You will not be Certified or Licensed. However, upon completion of the ACE program, you will be eligible to apply to the Massachusetts Board of Substance Abuse Counselor Certification to take the State Exam. Once you have passed the exam you will then be required to have a minimum amount of work experience before being fully credentialed. You will be considered “registered” with the MBSACC (Certification Board). The same is true for licensing in the Commonwealth. These issues are discussed during the program and assistance is offered to students with this process.