

# **SUNCOAST MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION**

## **By – Laws**

(Revision: Jan 26, 2008)

### **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 newsletters, journals or other scientific, educational and/or professional materials;
- 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 to advocate for the social and emotional welfare of clients;
- 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 the 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, and to
- Promote licensure standards for mental health counselors.

## **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 September 30 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 office (except President) 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, participation in all activities and committees; exclusions include holding office (except for Graduate Student Representative) and chairing a committee.

### **Section 2. Dues**

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

### **Section 3. Code of Ethics**

Members are expected to abide by the Ethical Code of the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA). 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 September 30 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 By-Laws 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- Officer Descriptions and Duties**

### **Section 1. 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; an 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 or General 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. Serve as editor of the SMHCA Newsletter in the absence of another designated Editor.

### **D. Treasurer:**

1. Qualifications: Professional LMHC or General 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 or designated Financial Committee as directed
  - e. Be responsible for any correspondence related to federal or state tax law.

### **E. Past-President**

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

## **Section 2. Additional Appointed Board Members**

All additional Board members will be appointed as needed, and be current members of the Association, appointed by the President and approved by a quorum of the Board, and serve a term of one year.

### **A. Assistant Treasurer - nonvoting**

The Assistant Treasurer will serve as a member of the Finance Committee, support the functions of the Treasurer, and perform other duties as necessary and appropriate to the office.

### **B. 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 "Roberts' Rules of Order."

**C. Graduate Student Representative - voting**

A current student member enrolled in a Graduate Mental Health Counselor Program included in District III of FMHCA. The Graduate Student Representative will serve on the Membership Committee, represent SMHCA at universities and perform other duties as necessary and appropriate to the office.

**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, promote the interests of SMHCA among Registered Interns in District III, and perform other duties as necessary and appropriate to the office.

**E. Counselor Educator Representative - voting**

A Counselor Educator on the faculty of a Graduate Mental Health Counselor Program included in District III of FMHCA. The Counselor Educator Representative will serve on the Membership Committee, function as a liaison to the Board with regard to the current concerns of graduate school mental health counselor faculty and perform other duties as necessary and appropriate to the office.

**F. 2 Members "At Large" as appointed by the President - voting**

The two "At Large" Board members shall be respected members of the association with interest and willingness to further the organization's purpose.

**G. Committee Chairpersons**

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

## **Article IV- Elections**

### **Section 1. Ballots**

The officers of SMHCA shall be elected by signed 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 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 serve 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 V- Meetings**

**Section 1.** The June meeting will be designated the Annual Membership Meeting.

**Section 2.** Special meetings may be called by the President or 5 members of the Board.

**Section 3.** Written notice of the agenda, time and location of the special meeting must be delivered to each Board member no less than 5 days prior to the meetings.

**Section 4.** Three of 5 elected officers and one half (50%) of vote eligible board members attending a general meeting will constitute a quorum.

## **Article VI – 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 committee chairpersons and additional Board Members appointed or designated by the President and approved by the Board.

### **Section 2. Meetings**

The Board shall meet at least 5 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 request of 3 members of the Board.

### **Section 3. Duties and Responsibilities**

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 by-laws.

The Board will conduct, manage and control the business of the Association in accordance with these bylaws. The Board may, at its discretion, contract with an outside organization for administrative services to be determined. No policy decisions may be delegated to any other entity.

### **Section 4. Appointment and Discharge**

Committee chairs must be approved by 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 (officer or other) by a quorum of the Board.

## **Section 5. Non-voting Members**

Honorary Board members specifically designated as such by the Board for their exemplary service to SMHCA shall be invited to attend Board meetings at any time although without a vote, unless also serving as a committee chair. Past-Presidents may also attend Board meetings: Immediate Past-Presidents as voting members and the others as non-voting participants.

## **Section 6. Expenses**

Decisions regarding expenses other than those in the approved budget must be presented to the Board and approved by a quorum.

# **Article VII – Standing and Special Committees**

## **Section 1. Standing Committees**

Four standing committees shall be provided for as needed in the ongoing development of SMHCA:

**A. Legislative** – informs and enlists the support of the Board and membership regarding key legislation and political activity related to mental health counseling. It will act as a liaison between SMHCA, FMHCA and its lobbyist in the identification and support of laws, program and practices affecting the

**B. Professional Development** – assesses the professional development needs of the membership, coordinates the provision of workshops, and ensures the provision of CEUs.

**C. Membership and Community Relations** – actively promotes SMHCA and FMHCA membership. Members will include the Counselor Educator Representative, The Student Representative, and such other members as may be appointed by the President. The Committee will promote all Association events and work closely with all Committee Chairpersons to relay their interest and concerns to the public as appropriate. It will promote understanding and positioning of mental health counseling to the public, third party payers, employers, and other professionals.

**D. Finance** – chaired by the Treasurer. The Committee will prepare a budget for the upcoming fiscal year and present it to the Board for approval at the first meeting of the fiscal year. The Committee will produce reports quarterly and for the end of the year to provide the Board with an accounting of expenditures and income, and may submit revisions to the approved budget as it may become necessary or expedient.

**F. Nominations** – chair appointed by the President and approved by a quorum of the Board. See Article IV, Section 2. Nominations

**G.** All Committee Chairs serve on the Board and have voting privileges as members of the Board. The Chairs 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 not be formal members. A vacancy on any standing committee may be filled by the Committee Chair with the approval of the President. The role and purpose of each committee created shall be determined by consultation with the Board.

## **Section 2. Special Committees**

Additional committees may be added as issues of concern arise. Two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board is needed to create additional committees.

## **Article VII -- Representation**

Amendment of the By-laws 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 By-laws may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the Board to be in compliance with FMHCA Governance Committee's recommendation for local chapters.