Letter from the President

FAITH JAMES, PHD, LMFT, LPC – President – president@nvlpc.org

Hello everyone, and welcome to a new and exciting year with NVLPC. I am very proud to be your returning President. Joining me is a powerful group of individuals who have a sense of purpose and dedication to this organization and its membership.

This past year has seen an influx of innovation on our part. The board worked very hard to maintain its commitment to providing quality Continued Education opportunities through our Breakfast Seminars and Workshops. We have been fortunate to have professionals step up to be speakers and to adapt to the ever-changing virtual landscape. We continue to rely on you, our membership, to serve as Seminar speakers and to submit newsletter articles.

The board’s vision this year is to continue with our Virtual Platform, at least until the end of the year. We will evaluate the spring format based on the guidance of the CDC and the speakers who partner with us. It is my hope that before the end of our year we will be able to gather in person with one another for an event.

The board is also dedicated to continuing to keep you all informed on legislative changes to our profession. To that end, our Advocacy section works hard to keep us updated. Our Membership Director focused on recruitment efforts last year, and our membership has increased. We are very proud of this. NVLPC seeks to expand our membership so that we can reach more professionals looking for resources and the ability to connect with other professionals.

I am honored to serve as your President and welcome any feedback that you may have to make our board stronger in every capacity. Please continue to attend events as the Events Director makes every effort to select speakers who will provide-up-to-date resources for service providers.

Finally, the board is recruiting for volunteers. If you feel compelled to volunteer, we are in need of several chair positions. Please reach out to us with your interest at vicepresident@nvlpc.org.

Let’s make this year amazing!

Respectfully,

Faith James, PhD, LPC, LMFT
Finding Your Niche

BY JOANNE THOMAS, MA, LPC, NCC

What area of counseling do I want to specialize in? What types of specialties are there? How do I know what is the best fit for me? These are all questions that you as a graduate student or new professional may have asked yourself.

I recently facilitated a training via webinar with Northern Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors on some of the many avenues available once you obtain that LPC license. There are a myriad of considerations once licensed, such as personal and professional goals, what types of settings would be more conducive to you, as well as exploring the options for work from home. What types of positions will suit my lifestyle and/or family?

When I discuss specialization with mentees, interns, and clinical supervisees, I first begin with: What are your areas of interest? Also, what are those opportunities that you would like to try to see if you enjoy, excel in, or what population would you most like to serve in counseling?

What I have found is that there are so many different areas of interest. The new specialization that has recently resonated with me is Perinatal Mental Health Counseling. As I have run across those postpartum mothers, both in my personal life and professional space, I have become passionate about obtaining more specialized training to work both efficiently and effectively with this population. Some places for additional training are Postpartum Support International (PSI) and Postpartum Support Virginia. It has been a sobering experience to recognize the misrepresentation of accurate diagnoses and racial disparities in women of color and the need for more specialized training. It has been exciting to build a caseload around this population and to confer with colleagues that also specialize in this area.

During this part of my journey, I have also been able to get a mentor who has been a wonderful resource and has offered time to provide additional resources for me in this field of study.

Ultimately, I believe that on each and every person's counseling journey, they must allow themselves the time and the ability to continue to grow, learn, and enhance those clients' lives that they come across. It starts with trying something new.

Student Essays

BY SHARON WATSON – Interim Education Director – education@nvlpc.org

NVLPC is committed to supporting our profession and has proudly offered a scholarship for masters-level students since 2012, with the goal of encouraging future practitioners in the counseling field.

This year, candidates were asked to write a 600-word essay about a topic of interest, including their experiences of any personal pain, challenges, or difficult situations that led to their topic, how they hoped to apply their topic to their career goals, and how they plan to make a difference in the counseling field.

Thank you to the students who spent the time completing the application and writing such excellent essays. Thank you as well to the five NVLPC volunteers who read and scored the essays.
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in this very challenging year. Essays written by the $1,000 scholarship winner and runner-up were published in the July Newsletter. Two students tied for third place, Neal Whitson and Diona Watkins, whose essays are published below. Neal and Diona will receive a free NVLPC breakfast event admission this year.

Congratulations to all four students. NVLPC wishes you the very best in your studies and counseling careers.

ESSAY BY NEAL WHITSON

Neal Whitson is a first-year graduate student at GMU. He currently works for the Fairfax County Community Services Board as an addictions clinician at Fairfax Detox. Neal’s clinical interests are grief and loss, particularly for survivors of people who took their own lives and counseling the HIV+ population.

This writer holds the opinion that for those who are dying, there are not enough souls to listen. For this population, whether elderly and living in a nursing or assisted-living home, or for the chronically ill who spend time between physician visits, the hospital, and home, and everyone who falls between or beyond those categories, I want to be the ears who listen to their story, and a soul who honors their own. Everyone wants to, and can, make a difference in someone’s life, but I want to make a difference in someone’s death by honoring the life that person lived.

Early in my academic career, I thought I wanted to be a psychiatrist, but as time went on and I learned and grew, a quiet voice within me steered me instead towards counseling. In particular, grief and end-of-life counseling is the arena in which I wish to devote my life’s work. I myself have experienced little loss, to be honest; in my family, I have lost three grandparents and one cousin, and I have not suffered the deaths of any friends. All the losses I have had have been due to chronic illness, and they were all at home, except for my cousin. I recognize, however, that many people cannot claim that the losses they had were as peaceful or predictable as my own. In light of that knowledge, I chose to pursue becoming a counseling student to further my skills to better help both those who are grieving and those who are dying.

It is my opinion that to most effectively and holistically heal the hearts of loved ones after someone passes, first work must be done to help them prepare for it. This is certainly not a one-size-fits-all approach, and I do not believe any one theory or modality has in it all the tools needed for this work, therefore, a comprehensive and culturally-sensitive approach, skillfully blending ideas and interventions from multiple schools of thought, must be used. I believe the same praxis will be used for the persons who are dying; simply listening to their concerns, failures, joys, and triumphs through their life will not be enough to prepare someone for the end of their life. Instead, I humbly suggest an approach that is patient, attentive, and gives the client full freedom to express themselves in the way they know best, whether written or spoken language, music, art, or any other mode of expression, as long as it does no harm to themselves or others. I fully expect this work to be difficult, and emotional, but never fruitless. To me, there is no greater honor than to be chosen to be present in the life of another during hardship.

Grief is a complicated and fickle thing. Although sometimes thought of as progressing in stages, I posit that instead, grief is more easily likened to a ball in a box someone else is playing with. Sometimes, the box gets shaken, and the ball careens wildly around the box, slamming into the walls; these are the times the grief hits us in unrelenting waves and spikes. Over time, the hope is that the ball gets smaller, and the box gets bigger, so that even when shaken, those waves and spikes are less severe and less frequent. This is the goal of the work I aspire to do.

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ESSAY BY DIONA WATKINS

Diona Watkins is a mental health counseling grad student studying at Capella University online. She is a member of Chi Sigma Iota Honor Society, the National Society of Leadership and Success, as well as a student member of the American Counseling Association. Diona is interning at National Capital Treatment and Recovery and is projected to graduate this December. Diona tells us that she knew from a young age she had a serving spirit and was always told she’s easy to talk to and has great energy. She shared “I love studying how we process and evolve from the things we experience—how this shapes us. I believe that as a woman of color and future counselor, it is important to be an ally and advocate of mental health services in my community. I want to help create safe spaces for black men, women, and children to start understanding and healing themselves and be able to navigate life’s challenges.”

In cases of ethnically diverse women who are victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), it is common for other mental health concerns to be co-occurring such as depression and PTSD (Sabri et al., 2013). Because of the prevalence of IPV in women of color and the decreased likelihood of this population of women seeking mental health services for this or other mental health disorders, these populations have been found to experience much more severe symptoms (Sabri et al., 2013). Understanding the disparity among women of color not only identifying with mental health concerns but accessing and utilizing mental health resources helps to provide context for the gaps in research and application of therapies to help individuals of color cope with PTSD and the issues related to it. Implementing trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapies has been demonstrated as effective in diverse groups of color (Cohen et al., 2016). As a woman of color that has survived IPV I understand the stigma within communities of color seeking mental health services, in addition to the guilt of admitting being a victim of IPV. This drives my passion to help connect with other women of color and make connections based on my personal experiences, education and training.

There are many concerns that contribute to the development of PTSD in communities of color. These reasons and contributing factors have gone overlooked because of lack of research, reporting, access to resources, finding and acknowledgement of the needs of this population. Limited attention is paid to the psychological effects of PTSD in the black community. PTSD and depression may have psychological and behavioral manifestations that contribute to recidivism, self-help or negative interactions and associations with organizations who exploit and underserve those (Richmond et al., 2017). With this in mind, there needs to be mental health personnel that are qualified and who identify with the communities being served so that trust and a genuine and meaningful rapport is developed and maintained. People with similar backgrounds and experiences can relate and speak to what has influenced their decision to want to help this community. It truly inspires change to occur in the landscape of the needs of the communities.

When programs must design plans that are suitable for their community but current literature does not provide current evidence-based practices for all aspects of programs that are needed process evaluation to investigate why is a necessary and beneficial process to help understand this. There may be many reasonable explanations for this such as lack of participants due to mistrust in the community and lack of education for the rationale for research. Royse et al (2016) explained that perceptions such as the presumption that the research will benefit white people; minorities receive poor quality health care; that minorities are recruited because researchers see them as less likely to question the procedures; information presented to them about the research is often not understandable are all barriers to gaps in literature on evidence-based practices. Ways to overcome these barriers are to target education programs to diverse backgrounds and experiences can relate and speak to what has influenced their decision to want to help this community. It truly inspires change to occur in the landscape of the needs of the communities.

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The Benefits of Membership in Northern Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors (NVLPC)

BY MARIE HARRIS, MS, LMHP-R, Membership Director – membership@nvlpc.org

Over the last 30 years, NVLPC has increased to 350+ members and continues to expand. Our organization consists of graduate and doctoral students, mental health professionals (LPC, LMFT, LCSW, PhD.), and others in the field, representing established private practices and adjunct public entities. We are a local non-profit organization committed to the mental health profession and needs of the community. We support and enable graduate counseling students and professionals through advocacy, educational presentations, workshops, and networking events. The cost of membership in NVLPC is typically less than similar counseling advocacy groups, and members benefit from an organization that maintains a specific focus on providing local support to those seeking licensure in our community.

Our NVLPC Mission Statement is:
“To meet the professional needs of counselors, counseling residents and counseling students in Northern Virginia, so that we may effectively contribute to the mental health and general welfare of our community.”

NVLPC guiding principles are to:
- **ENGAGE** by facilitating a networking system for members to develop collegial relationships to share information and ideas.
- **ENHANCE** our professional and ethical competence by promoting and providing high quality and affordable continuing education for the benefit of clients.
- **ENCOURAGE** by providing guidance to counseling students and residents as they transition toward licensure.
- **ENLIGHTEN** by increasing public recognition of the counseling profession and by collaborating with other professional organizations as they advocate for issues and legislation that impacts us.

We address diverse counselor concerns and professional development. NVLPC provides needed resources for graduate students and Residents in Counseling to enable them to navigate challenges as they move forward in their careers. Our Student Development Committee, combined with the NVLPC Board, are comprised of professionals in the mental health counseling field, who enthusiastically mentor members with their professional pursuits.

The Resident in Counseling Support Group meets monthly for those transitioning from graduation to licensure and provides an opportunity for students and residents to share information about licensure requirements, discuss how to find a supervisor, and prepare for the licensure exam with study techniques, resources, and possible study partners. Many have expressed how helpful this was in passing the NCMHCE.

Special workshops, trainings and seminars are offered as extended opportunities to acquire specific knowledge and skill development. Topics are relevant to areas of professional development and current clinical issues. Presenters are recognized regionally and nationally.

Complete references from this essay are available upon request by emailing newsletter@nvlpc.org.

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... communities, partner with community-based organizations, and improve access to clinical care and support services for them (Royse, Thyer & Padgett, 2016). Additionally, instead of focusing on only PTSD cases in those that have experienced combat as veterans, perhaps assessing the needs in local communities and neighborhoods of color and understanding their needs as it relates to trauma can also overcome barriers to evidence-based practices for needed programs (Cuffe et al., 1998).

Bulletin
Announcements

All members are welcome to submit 25 words (or less) announcing a workshop, group or other news. For inclusion in the next Newsletter (September), please send content to newsletter@nvlpc.org by August 15.
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Attendees can receive Continuing Education Units. These events also provide opportunities for networking with other attendees.

Online forums and blogs with other NVLPC members are also an active part of networking within NVLPC. These enable discussions for frequently asked questions and receiving quick responses about professional issues and current events affecting our local communities.

Not only is peer support a great benefit to membership in NVLPC, but also crucial is the networking with professionals willing to mentor graduate students and non-licensed therapists who are working toward licensure. Member networking opportunities greatly enhance career success, with access to 400+ members in Northern Virginia, serving in diverse capacities.

Legislative advocacy through NVLPC increases public recognition and the professional identity of the counseling profession. This advocacy disseminates information from state and national organizations. This information is usually time specific to legislation or policy issues in the State of Virginia and/or Federal Government. NVLPC helps our members have a voice on local, state and national levels regarding licensing matters, new laws and regulations, as well as influencing legislation at the grass-roots level. Legislative and informational alerts are sent out to encourage involvement by members on behalf of their clients, profession, and mental health communities. NVLPC members contributed positively to several recent legislative initiatives, including Medicare inclusion of masters-level clinicians, managed care accountability, and adherence to fair business practices.

You may choose to serve and give back to the organization and community through serving on the NVLPC Board. This is an excellent way to network with other LPCs and use your skills in an organization dedicated to Northern Virginia LPCs. Reach out to us via email at: executiveadmin@nvlpc.org, or join NVLPC at: https://www.nvlpc.org/page/howtojoin. Serving and contributing in NVLPC contributes to a solid résumé. NVLPC openly listens and appreciates all recommendations. We would love to hear from you and receive your ideas and contributions. We welcome you and invite you to join us in this great cause.

Part-Time Executive Administrator Opportunity

The Northern Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors Association (NVLPC) invites interested applicants to apply for the following part-time position: Executive Administrator.

The role of the Executive Administrator (EA) is to work in collaboration with the Board and to be the administrative arm of the organization. Interested applicants should be licensed at the master’s level in the field of Counseling. This position requires strong communication, written, research, and leadership skill. Applicants should possess: knowledge of virtual software (zoom, google, and website software), flexibility/availability of schedule to accommodate the needs of event/breakfast seminars and the presenters, and the ability to communicate effectively with members on a weekly basis. The Executive Administrator will also manage our website along with the Communications Director.

If you are interested in being a part of our team, please send your resume and cover letter to president@nvlpc.org.

Residents in Counseling Support Group Has Announced Fall Dates!

This group provides a supportive, informative environment for students and residents as they work towards licensure.

- Saturday, September 4, 11:00AM
- Saturday, October 2, 11:00AM
- Saturday, November 6, 11:00AM
- Saturday, December 4, 11:00AM

See all fall dates and register to attend on the NVLPC Website Community Calendar Page.
The Supervision Corner

BY SHARON WATSON – Supervision Chair – supervision@nvlpc.org

In the last newsletter (July 2021), I wrote that the Virginia Board of Counseling regulations dated 10/15/2020 were about to change, which they did. The new regs now in effect are dated June 23, 2021 and now include the “Emergency Regulations” that went into effect December 23, 2019. Supervisors and residents are responsible for knowing the regulations.

Often the forms change as well with an update in the regulations (like the quarterly and verification of supervision forms) making it difficult for those of us who make a “master” for each resident to minimize the time filling out the forms. But happily, at least these 2 forms didn’t change and are dated 12/2019. In case you didn’t know this, the date of the form is in very small print on the bottom left of each form. The Board of Counseling requires that you use the form that is currently in use.

It’s often difficult to easily see the changes when the regulations are updated, so I’ve compared the new regs to the previous ones. Here are the changes so you don’t have to find them yourself! Quotes taken directly from the regulations are in the Times New Roman italicized font in order to be distinguished from my comments. I’ve listed them in order:

18VAC115-20-10. Definitions. The following was added: “Supervisory Contract” means an agreement that outlines the expectations and responsibilities of the supervisor and resident in accordance with regulations of the board.

18VAC115-20-20. Fees required by the Board. The order and some of the titles of the fees has changed:

“Registration of supervision” is now called “Application and initial licensure as a resident in counseling” (the fee remains the same of $65)

The fee for add/change supervisor has been removed since that no longer requires a new application

“Late renewal” has been expanded to “Late renewal for a professional counselor $45” and “Late renewal for a resident in counseling $10”

“Returned check” is now “Returned check or dishonored credit or debit card” and the fee has increased to $50

18VAC115-20-49. Degree program requirements. The following sub-section has been added:

C. Graduates of programs that are not within the United States or Canada shall provide documentation from an acceptable credential evaluation service that provides information that allows the board to determine if the program meets the requirements set forth in this chapter.

18VAC115-20-52. Residency requirements. This section has changed to: 18VAC115-20-52. Resident license and requirements for a residency. And includes the following:

Section A has changed to:

A. Resident license. Applicants for temporary licensure as a resident in counseling shall:

1. Apply for licensure on a form provided by the board to include the following: (i) verification of a supervisory contract, (ii) the name and licensure number of the clinical supervisor and

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Groups.io Tip

Thank you to Sharon Watson, who submitted a tip for using the groups.io communication tool.

Groups.io Links:

In some other listserv platforms, the options for replying to the sender or to the entire group are located at the top of the email. However, in our groups.io email, those options are listed at the bottom:

View/Reply Online
(#651)
Reply To Group
Reply To Sender
Mute This Topic
New Topic
Your Subscription
Contact Group Owner
Unsubscribe

As we all adjust to using groups.io, we would like to post more tips in upcoming newsletters. If you have a tip to suggest, please send it to newsletter@nvlpc.org.

Not on groups.io with us yet? Go to the NVLPC website. On most pages other than the homepage, there’s a link to join below the calendar. Join the conversation!

Resources for Members

NVLPC hosts an email group/listserv just for members who are current in their paid membership. Request to join our NVLPC listsev here!

Looking for support, camaraderie, and connection with fellow therapists? Consider joining a Peer Support Group. Sign up here!

Additional resources available under “For Members” on the website.

18VAC115-20-70. General examination requirements; schedules; time limits.

In section A the following sentence has been added: An applicant is required to have passed the prescribed examination within six years from the date of initial issuance of a resident license by the board.

Sections C, C 1, C 2, D, and E have been changed to simply say:

C. The board shall establish a passing score on the written examination.

D. A resident shall remain in a residency practicing under supervision until the resident has passed the licensure examination and been granted a license as a professional counselor.

This change eliminated the requirement to renew an application to take the examination after a 2-year period since the change in section A above states that licensure must take place within 6 years.

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18VAC115-20-100. Annual renewal of licensure.
Sections A – E have been revamped in the new regs to now distinguish between the license renewal processes between LPC and the 2019 added licensure renewal process for Residents:

C. For renewal of a resident license in counseling, the following shall apply:

1. A resident license shall expire annually in the month the resident license was initially issued and may be renewed up to five times by submission of the renewal form and payment of the fee prescribed in 18VAC115-20-20.

2. On the annual renewal, the resident shall attest that a supervisory contract is in effect with a board-approved supervisor for each of the locations at which the resident is currently providing clinical counseling services.

3. On the annual renewal, the resident in counseling shall attest to completion of three hours in continuing education courses that emphasize the ethics, standards of practice, or laws governing behavioral science professions in Virginia, offered by an approved provider as set forth in subsection B of 18VAC115-20-106.

This review and comments are my own and not those of NVLPC. If you have any questions about this article or any of my previous articles or if you have ideas for future supervision topics, please email me. I’m happy to research any questions you may have regarding supervision, residency, and the regulations. You can email me at supervision@nvlpc.org.