

A Guide to

---

# ADDICTION COUNSELOR

Credentialing



EDUCATIONAL ENHANCEMENT



# Educational Enhancement

## A Guide to Addiction Counselor Credentialing

Hello and thank you for your interest in the **Educational Enhancement-CASAC Online education and training program.**

Drug and alcohol counseling is one of the fastest growing careers in the nation—and one of the most rewarding. If you have a passion for helping people, this is the work you were born to do.

**Educational Enhancement** has been training addiction counselors since 2002 in New York State and is currently applying for national accreditation. If you are from another state and would like to train with Educational Enhancement-CASAC Online, please notify your state's certification board of your request, so we can start a conversation with the governing board.

Our addiction counselor education and training school has a proven track record of success:

- Our graduates have a 99.5% pass rate taking the licensure/certification examination within six months of graduation.

- And 92% of graduates are successfully employed within six months of graduation.

## Contents

In this guide, we will provide you with pertinent information to help you along the way to becoming an addiction counseling professional. In NYS a qualified health professional practicing in addiction treatment is referred to as a Credentialed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC).

- I. The Expected Growth in the Addiction Recovery Industry
- II. Addiction Counseling Knowledge, Strengths, and Skills
- III. CASAC Licensure and Certification
- IV. Conclusion

Your choice to become an addiction counselor is more than simply  
a career path.  
It's your calling.

## I. The Expected Growth in the Addiction Recovery Industry

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), substance abuse, behavioral and mental health counselors are among the occupations that will see the most new jobs. The BLS predicts that there will be 79,000 new jobs between 2019 and 2029 at a median annual salary of \$46,240. The number of marriage and family therapists is expected to jump nearly 23% in those 10 years while employment for substance abuse, behavioral and mental health counselors will grow 24.7%.

### Drug & alcohol counselors are in demand

Job opportunities for drug and alcohol counselors are predicted to be favorable for the foreseeable future because job openings are expected to exceed the number of students graduating from counseling programs. Some of the growth in job availability may be attributed to the long hours demanded by this occupation, resulting in some counselors transitioning to different careers or retiring.

Statistics suggest that rural areas will offer more opportunities. Changes in health insurance policies, allowing for coverage of counseling services, will also drive growth in the field, especially as a less costly alternative to psychiatrists and psychologists.

Mental health centers and methadone clinics will require more counselors, and treatment programs will expand as drug offenders seek counseling in greater numbers than in the past. In addition, as prisons continue to face overcrowding, judges are ordering drug offenders to complete rehabilitation programs as alternatives to incarceration; these decisions are naturally heightening the demand for substance abuse counselors.

Despite ongoing budget constraints, some school districts are beginning to hire substance abuse professionals for high-risk student populations and as a preventative measure to protect their communities at large. Society as a whole is becoming more aware and knowledgeable about addiction, causing more people to seek help and treatment from counselors.

**While job security is a great benefit, what really calls addiction counselors to their profession is a passion for helping others transform their lives.**

You may have a loved one who is struggling/struggled with substance use disorder. Perhaps, you may have experienced the devastating impact of addiction on families and communities. Maybe you are in recovery yourself and know firsthand the power of counseling to transform and heal. If you fall into any of these categories there isn't a more rewarding and fulfilling career you can choose—addiction counselors save lives. Whether you are in recovery or not, if you're driven to help, we will educate and train you to be an efficient and effective addiction counselor. With your knowledge and understanding of addiction you will guide others in finding the strength needed to recover and heal.

## Work settings

Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors held about 319,400 jobs in 2019.

The largest employers of substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors were as follows:

Outpatient mental health and substance abuse centers	19%
Individual and family services	16%
Hospitals; state, local, and private	10%
Residential mental health and substance abuse facilities	10%
Government agencies and facilities	08%

Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors work in a wide variety of settings, including mental health centers, prisons, probation or parole agencies, and juvenile detention facilities. They also work in halfway houses, detox centers, or in employee assistance programs (EAPs). EAPs are mental health programs provided by some employers to help employees deal with personal problems.

Some addiction counselors work in residential treatment centers, where clients live in the facility for a fixed period of time. Others work with clients in outpatient treatment centers. Some

counselors work in private practice, where they may work alone or with a group of counselors or other professionals.

## II. Addiction Counseling —Knowledge, Strengths, and Skills

Addiction counselors provide a necessary support system for individuals recovering from eating disorders, drug and alcohol issues, gambling addictions, and other behavioral issues. By forming a relationship built on trust with their patients, counselors provide the support, resources, and judgement-free guidance that patients can utilize on their road to addiction recovery. Certified addiction counselors help people struggling with substance use disorders in both crisis situations and long-term recovery management. Your work as a CASAC can range from an immediate medical intervention to supporting long-term continuing recovery care.

### The Client Counselor Relationship

Deciding to commit to treatment for a substance use disorder(s) (SUD) is not easy. While making a decision to attend treatment people with SUD can face many different barriers. Therefore it is vital that you (counselor) strive to build a strong bond with your clients. This relationship is often referred to as the therapeutic alliance.

The client/counselor relationship is built on trust and rapport. The trust found within this bond allows clients to feel vulnerable, yet safe, while actively working with you ( the addictions

counselor) to sort out and resolve trauma, crisis situations, and other issues related to their SUD.

You will develop relationships with your clients. At times, you may have to go above and beyond to help them. You have to know your boundaries, so you don't enable behaviors. It is very important that you are non-judgmental and do not criticize mistakes in a client's past. You want your clients to be open with you and feel like they can approach you even if they have a relapse. Good addiction counselors build a trusting relationship with clients.

**Your education and training will help you to build strong therapeutic alliances by:**

- Ensuring patients know you are interested in their well being
- Attentiveness during sessions
- Letting patients know you can empathize with their problems
- Understanding and communicating the foundational issues at play in recovery

The therapeutic alliance is a key tenet of addiction recovery counseling. By creating an environment where patients feel comfortable and welcome discussing their hardships, counselors can better help their clients on the road to recovery.

Addictions counselors are typically responsible for substance use history and diagnosing SUD, evaluating client mental health, developing treatment goals, recommending treatment options, helping individuals modify behaviors for recovery, educating

families on how to cope with addiction behaviors, and/or referring clients to other supportive resources in the community..

Due to the fact that addiction professionals often deal with clients in crisis situations and have a large impact on the lives of others, it is necessary for addiction counselors to be highly trained.

**Your addiction counselor education and training at Educational Enhancement CASAC Online will prepare you to:**

- Encourage patient recovery
- Help patients create a plan for recurrence (relapse prevention)
- Provide guidance to family members
- Understand the importance of peer support groups
- Identifying issues and create goals and treatment plans
- Helping clients find a job or career
- Update reports for the courts
- And more

At **Educational Enhancement-CASAC Online**, you'll receive a number of the following skills and abilities. You'll find that a lot of the skills learned in classes will relate directly to the personality of a good counselor.

The most pertinent thing you will learn is how to communicate with individuals afflicted by addiction. You will be taught about different stages of addiction, the effects of withdrawal, and how

these issues can influence a person's family life and their relationship with their friends.

You will also learn how to instill coping mechanisms in people who may experience a relapse. And most importantly, you will learn how to educate individuals on the ways in which they can restructure their lives in the wake of SUD

Culturally sensitive practices are also an essential point of drug and alcohol counseling. Beyond that, there are a lot of specific points of counseling that will be looked at deeply during your coursework.

It would be difficult to summarize the entire course curriculum here, but there is a wealth of information and training included in a person's counseling education. Much of that coursework branches out into different areas of study that you didn't even imagine were related to your future profession.

## Valuable Skills for an Addiction Counselor

Because you will be dealing with some difficult situations, it's important to have some various personality traits in order to succeed with patients.

**Here are a few characteristics that make a good substance abuse counselor:**

- Good listener
- Strong desire to help others
- Confidence
- Motivation

- Inspiration
- Excellent communication skills
- Respect privacy
- Empathy
- Advocacy

Now let's move on to the steps you'll take as you aspire to this rewarding career.

### III. CASAC (addiction counselor)

#### Licensure and Certification

##### Credentialing Process

Each state has its own substance abuse treatment and counseling governing board. There are similarities in the process regardless of whether the state issues the credential directly or entrusts an outside agency. In NY State, the governing board is **the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS)**. However, the credentialing process often varies. Some states license or certify substance abuse counselors directly. Some direct them to a third-party certification agency. There may be just one recognized certification board in your jurisdiction or there may be several. The most widely accepted certification boards are members of the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) or affiliates of the Association of Substance Abuse Professionals (NAADAC).

##### NYS CASAC-T

In some cases, you will hold an entry-level credential while you accrue your experience.

In NYS the entry-level certification is called a CASAC-T (CASAC Trainee). You will receive a completion certification from Educational Enhancement once you complete 350 hours of

education and training. You will then start your CASAC application process and submit the completed application with your certificate and a transcript from all undergraduate and graduate studies to OASAS.

OASAS will review your application and then return their decision to you in 6 weeks. Your decision will include a certification (CASAC-T) which will allow you to begin to work in the field. At this point, you can begin your internship hours.

**\*Note:** In NYS, an individual can be credentialed as a CASAC Trainee when some of the requirements have been met. The Credentialing Unit notes that in certain OASAS-certified facilities, Trainees may be counted as Qualified Health Professionals (QHPs) for the purpose of meeting staffing requirements; this is not the case in most settings.

## Character and Professional Competence Requirements

Your credentialing agency will also have policies in place to assure that you meet ethical and legal standards and have the capacity to practice competently. You may have a fingerprint-based criminal background check as a condition of licensing. You may instead sign a release authorizing the certification board to carry out background screening. Independent certification boards often

require several letters of reference. They also ask you to sign a code of ethics.

If you have ever had substance abuse or addiction problem, you may need to attest that you have been drug-free for a specified period of time.

## Educational Requirements

Depending on the specific work setting, state regulations, and level of responsibility in certain counseling roles, the educational requirements for addictions counselors varies greatly. In most cases, a high school diploma or GED is the minimum requirement, though some boards set standards higher. In most states, qualified health professional certifications (addiction counseling credential i.e.; NYS certification CASAC) do not require a college degree. However, they do require a set number of related education hours; some will be addiction-related, others counseling-related. In many cases, you have the option of completing your hours through formal academic coursework or continuing education.

## NYS State Education Requirements

A candidate will need 350 clock hours of education and training that develop addiction counseling competencies.

A minimum of 85 hours will develop substance abuse and alcohol knowledge. Of these, at least four must address tobacco usage and nicotine dependence.

At least 150 will address alcohol and substance abuse counseling. Of these, at least 15 must be in cultural competence.

At least 70 must be in the combined areas of assessment, evaluation, case management, treatment planning, and patient/family/ community education.

No fewer than 45 may address professional and ethical responsibilities. At least 15 of these must cover ethics as it relates to addictions professionals. At least two must cover mandatory reporting of child abuse and maltreatment.

New York has recently moved to a standardized curriculum. Candidates may opt for an educational package that offers academic credit or one that does not. All certified providers cover the same material.

**Educational Enhancement CASAC-Online** offers 350 hours of addiction counselor education and training **required and approved** by NYS OASAS in our no hassle, self-study, self-paced, online platform.

**\*Note:** It is still permissible to credit college coursework provided it meets the requirements. Some coursework taken as part of the qualifying degree program may be applied to education and training requirements. Candidates will use the credentialing application to request that their transcripts be evaluated.

## Experience Requirements

You will work a specified number of hours (typically, 2,000 or more) before you are fully credentialed. You may need to register or pursue an entry-level credential in the interim. However, this is not a universal requirement. Your state agency may mandate that a certain percentage of the counseling staff is ‘qualified’; the rest may be working toward this status. Chances are good that your supervisor will eventually need to provide an evaluation or recommendation to the certification board.

Internship hours vary from state to state. For example, NYS OASAS requires 6000 experience hours, which is the equivalent of 3 years. 6000 hours! I know that seems daunting. But notice “experience” is the keyword here. Treatment programs often hire CASAC-T after an initial 3-6 month internship is completed. Don’t panic, you’ll start being paid for your experience before you know it. Remember when I wrote in your application package you were to include any college transcripts? Many states allow addiction counselors applicants to apply for undergraduate and graduate degrees to their experience hours.

Let’s look at how OASAS applies college to study to the experience requirement in the application process.

- If you have an Associate’s degree in a board-approved Human Services discipline from an accredited institution of higher learning you may reduce your supervised hours required by 1,000.

- If you have a Bachelor’s degree in a board-approved Human Services discipline from an accredited institution of higher learning you may reduce your supervised hours required by 2,000.
- If you have a Master’s degree in a board-approved Human Services discipline from an accredited institution of higher learning you may reduce your supervised hours required by 4,000.

The credentialing agency has provided a list of approved human service fields (<https://oasas.ny.gov/providers>) Among the options are anthropology, audiology, community mental health, criminal justice, dance therapy, divinity, education, gerontology, music therapy, nursing, nutrition, occupational therapy, psychology, and rehabilitation counseling.

Work must take place in an approved setting. There must be at least 300 hours of supervised practical training. The trainee must have a minimum of ten hours of practical training in each of the core addiction counseling functions; this will necessitate direct supervision by a Qualified Health Professional (QHP).

Volunteer work is creditable without limit if it is completed under a formal agreement and otherwise meets Credentialing Unit standards (including supervision requirements). A candidate may choose to credit a formal internship experience as education/training or supervised experience, but cannot count it as both.

## Examination Requirements

You will also need to go through an examination process. This typically takes place after you have applied. Most boards require NAADAC or IC&RC examinations. Some states will accept either. In some cases, the only requirement is for a written (computer-based) examination. In others, you must pass an oral examination. You may need to prepare case studies and submit them with your application. NYS OASAS has removed the oral examination requirement from the credentialing process.

You may also need to take a jurisprudence examination (a test of your knowledge of counseling-related law and ethics).

CASAC candidates must take a written examination. The exam was developed by the IC&RC. The Credentialing Unit has provided the following resources

Candidates will call the Credentialing Unit at 1-800-482-9564 to request a registration form. A candidate can be approved any time after educational requirements have been met; it will be necessary to submit an application. The exam will cost \$245.

The exam is offered via computer at ISO Quality Testing centers. There are six New York locations: New York City, Syracuse, Buffalo, Albany, Flushing, and Binghamton.

### **Additional Requirements**

The prospective CASAC will need to have three professionals provide evaluations of competency and ethical conduct. One must come from the current or most recent clinical supervisor. One

must come from a CASAC or an addiction counselor who holds reciprocal-level credentialing through some IC&RC board.

One must come from a professional who is designated as a Qualified Health Professional. The professional must have substance abuse training and experience. He or she may hold credentialing as any of the following: counselor, family therapist, master or clinical social worker, registered nurse, occupational therapist, physician, physician's assistant, psychologist, rehabilitation counselor, or therapeutic recreational therapist; a CASAC would also qualify. The Credentialing Unit has provided detailed information about evaluator requirements

## **Credentialing... and Beyond**

When you have met all requirements, you will be authorized to use a particular title. This title will vary from state to state. It may include the word 'licensed' or 'certified'. Third party boards issue certifications, never licenses. State agencies may issue either licenses or certifications. In some states, the term 'licensed' refers to master's level practitioners while 'certified' refers to those below this level. In others, all are termed 'licensed'.

How important is the title? Not much! It can be important what agency grants it. Still, holding a third party certification doesn't necessarily mean you are at a disadvantage if you relocate. Some government licensing agencies are member boards of the IC&RC. Reciprocity is often a fairly simple process, though some states set requirements above the norm. Reciprocity is the allowance of

using one state credential in order to work as a qualified addiction (health) professional under a different state governing board.

## IV. Conclusion

### Is the Certified Addiction Counselor an Inferior Credential

While the requirements are very different and the level of practice is as well, it is hard to say that one credential is “better” than another. The certifications are geared toward very different people. In most cases seeking the addiction counselor credential through an approved education and training provider seems more logical. When fulfilling your education and training requirements through a provider such as Educational Enhancement-CASAC Online you can be in the field and working in as little as 4-6 months depending on your motivation and effort.

Our training is a self-paced and self-study program that allows you to learn when and where you want, without waiting for classes to start or interruptions from other students. However, you are never on your own. Our team of addiction professional trainers is available to answer your questions, motivate and encourage optimal performance, and supervise you along the way to your addiction professional credential.

Once you receive your CASAC credential from NYS OASAS you can always go back to school for specialized addiction counselor undergraduate or graduate study. However, the CASAC credential is by no means inferior to a CASAC-2 or Advanced CASAC credential. A CASAC is a qualified health professional.

After you have worked in the field for 3 years or more you can obtain your National Certified Addiction Counselor, Level I

(NCAC I), This is a voluntary *national* certification. However having this credential shows clients, employers, and colleagues your commitment to quality care.

## U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

As we stated earlier state licensing is often a separate process. Here is a synopsis of 5 states that employ the most substance abuse counselors (in brackets), per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS May 2016). These are their respective educational requirements:

1. California (9,050): The Addiction Counselor Certification Board of California awards the Certified Addictions Treatment Counselor (CATC I) credential to those who have completed programs that are accredited by the California Association for Alcohol/ Drug Educators (CAADE) or deemed equivalent. Candidates must accrue 2,240 hours in a state-licensed facility. Candidates also must take and pass the Certified Addictions Treatment Counselor (CATC) Exam.
2. New York (7,600): A candidate will need 350 clock hours of education and training that develop addiction counseling competencies. These hours are divided into specific areas: substance abuse, alcoholism, clinical evaluation, treatment planning, tobacco usage, and others.
3. Pennsylvania (6,730): The minimum qualification requires an associate's degree in chemical dependency, counseling,

psychology, social work, or related field. The Certified Associate Addiction Counselor (CAAC) must have 300 hours of education that is relevant to addiction counseling

4. Massachusetts (5,010): An individual may be licensed as a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor I (LADC) on the basis of a master's or doctoral degree from an institution with national or regional accreditation. The degree must be in the behavioral sciences. The graduate must have at least 18 semester hours of counseling or related subjects. Additionally, the LADC candidate must complete a program of study that includes at least 270 hours that address a "full range" of concepts related to alcohol and drug counseling.
5. Florida (4,440): Applicants may achieve Certified Addiction Counselor (CAC) status with a high school diploma or GED. CAC must have at least 250 hours of training relevant to the job role. Education must include at least 60 hours each in 1) understanding addictions and treatment and 2) professional readiness/ application to practice. Professional readiness curriculum must include two hours of domestic violence training and four hours of HIV/AIDS, regardless. The experience requirement is 6,000 hours for a trainee with education at the high school level, 4,000 for one with an associate or vocational degree.

As you can see there are always opportunities for applicants with high school education to launch their career in addiction counseling.

Thank you for your time and I hoped we answered your questions in our **Guide to Addiction Counselor Certification**.

### **For more questions**

Email:

John Makohen: [john@EducationalEnhancement-casaonline.com](mailto:john@EducationalEnhancement-casaonline.com)

To Submit college courses in the field of addiction studies to our compliance officer email:

Maria Mendez: [Edctnenhancement@aol.com](mailto:Edctnenhancement@aol.com)

You can also call:

Maria Mendez @

John Makohen @ 201-701-3205

## About Educational Enhancement CASAC- Online

Educational Enhancement is a premier Online Addiction Counselor Training and Education Provider. Our curriculum is approved by OASAS in New York State (provider #0415).

### Our Story

Educational Enhancement was founded in 2002. Since its inception, we have provided training to over 5000 students with an average 97% pass rate on the IC & RC exam. In 2020, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) forced all of us to adapt to new schedules, new lifestyles, and new normals.

Educational Enhancement is the first ONLINE Addictions Counselor education and training, self-study program, in New York State. Our OASAS certified trainers are available to keep you motivated towards your goal and answer all your questions along your journey to becoming an Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CASAC in NYS).

Educational Enhancement is an approved CASAC Education and Training provider #0415 for the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

## Our Mission--Encourage. Educate. Empower.

Educational Enhancement aims to provide you with the highest standard of Online Addictions Counselor Education and Training. Once you become part of our professional development community we will continue to serve and inspire you in all your endeavors within the Addiction Recovery field. What distinguishes us from other training providers is that we gauge our success on your success.

—Your success inspires us to excel.

## Our Philosophy

It is our belief, at Educational Enhancement that when you excel in your career as an addiction professional, so do we. We are here to provide you with the highest standard of education and professional development. When you become part of our online addictions counselor education and training program you will be prepared to proudly step into the Chemical Dependency field. You will not only receive an education in a self-paced, enjoyable virtual classroom, but you'll join our community of peers. Your peers will encourage and motivate you to strive to reach the highest level of professional growth and development.

## Our Commitment

Our commitment to you as an online addictions counselor education and training provider is to offer you all the tools and support you need to succeed. Once you purchase our training the material is yours to keep so you can watch it over again and again. Our trainers are NYS CASAC, NAADAC, and IC & RC credentialed trainers. We are available to you via email, telephone, and in our private Linked In community. We are here to ENCOURAGE. EDUCATE. and EMPOWER you to succeed in motivating and making lasting impressions on persons struggling with substance use or co-occurring disorders, today.

## About **Maria Mendez, President; CEO**

Advanced CASAC, NCAC I, Trainer

Maria has been in the field for over 30 years and has been training clinicians since 2002.

She has a wealth of knowledge, compassion, and passion for working with new students coming into the field.

## About **John Makohen VP; COO**

Johnny is passionate about online addiction counselor training. He has repurposed Educational Enhancement's traditional educational material in self-study training for you to thrive in the field of addictions counseling. John enjoys motivating new CASACs and CASAC renewal applicants to succeed independently in all areas of their professional development.

John is responsible to guide you through this training, both from a technical and motivational perspective. You can reach him in several ways listed below. It is suggested that you add his email addresses to your contact list so you never miss an email from him or the team.

**Thank you**

**Educational Enhancement**