

March 2020

HEALTHCARE HIGHLIGHTS

The Rural AHEC Student Newsletter



March's Healthcare Career Focus:

Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC)

CASAC's provide counseling services regarding addiction and substance use to a wide variety of people in various settings. Counselors may enter private practice and operate a stand-alone office or may join a group of mental health practitioners or other health care professionals.. Hospitals, VA centers, behavioral health treatment centers, and schools also provide opportunities for employment of CASACs. This form of counseling can be challenging, but also a rewarding and inspiring job.

What might I do as a CASAC or Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor?

Meet with clients to evaluate their health and substance use disorder and develop a treatment plan together

Lead individual and group therapy sessions to assist clients in setting goals and learning coping mechanisms

Share knowledge, techniques, and strategies regarding stress management, anger management, and working through depression or traumatic experiences

Collaborate with other mental health professionals to evaluate clients

Provide updates and progress reports to courts and other official agencies

Assist clients with job searches and referrals to other community services

Monitor aftercare plans for clients to ensure they provide adequate support networks and safety net options



How do I become a CASAC?

- Graduate with a HS diploma or GED
- Complete 6,000 hours or about 3 years of supervised experience at an approved site
- **OR** obtain an Associate's degree in Human Services and complete 5,000 hours
- **OR** obtain a Bachelor's degree in Human Services and complete 4,000 hours
- **OR** obtain a Master's degree and complete 2,000 hours
- **AND** successfully complete the certification exam for Alcohol and Drug Counselors

Average Salary:
\$38,900—\$51,100

What is it really like to be a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC)?

A good way to see if being a CASAC would be a good fit for **you** is to see what specific education and training are required to be eligible to take the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (ICRC) exam for Alcohol and Drug Counselors. Training consists of learning experiences in the following areas:

- physical effects of alcoholism and substance abuse
- Intervention and treatment approaches, including self-help groups
- Culturally sensitive counseling and family education/communication
- Professional and ethical responsibilities, including Child Abuse Mandated Reporter training



According to the School of Addiction Studies, successful CASACs display the following characteristics: empathy (ability to place yourself in another's shoes), confidence, good listening skills, and a sincere desire to help others. (<https://sobercollege.com/substance-use-counselor/skills-and-characteristics/>. Accessed March 4, 2020.)

For more information about day-to-day activities as a CASAC, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pM_Xfm1Zdvk Meet Jackie at Phoenix Multisports, an innovative addiction treatment program that is seeing unprecedented success: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzpTWaXshfM&t=626s>

Interested in reading more about Substance Abuse Counseling?

Check out this realistic and down-to-earth article:

<https://www.absoluteadvocacy.org/typical-day-substance-abuse-counselor/>



“On a personal level, I have been blessed to work with adults in the pursuit of recovery and abstinence since 2003. This was when I realized the impact of the disorder upon individuals, families, and our greater community and decided that I wanted to make a positive impact...”

“I have formed rewarding counseling relationships with many amazing clients as they bravely step away from their destructive coping mechanism. Seeing their courage on the journey to substance-free lives has made me a grateful witness...”

Douglas Klier, M.A., C.A.C.

“The typical day for a substance abuse counselor is constantly changing. You will be exposed to new people, new ideas, and new misbeliefs on a regular basis...”

Kiesha Mclean-Green

Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center

20 Duncan Street, Warsaw, New York 14569

585-786-6275

lgreen@r-ahec.org

www.r-ahec.org

Please contact us if you have questions about healthcare career opportunities or educational pathways to healthcare careers!

Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center (R-AHEC) is one of nine centers in the New York State Area Health Education Center (NYSAHEC) organization. Our mission is to improve health and healthcare through education.

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