

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Changes to Substance Use Disorder Counselor Licensing Laws

1. What prompted the changes to the substance use disorder counselor licensing laws?

In May 2011, the Utah Substance Abuse Advisory Council (USAAV) Treatment Committee created the Behavioral Healthcare Workforce Group for the purpose of discussing possible changes to licensing and scope of practice for substance abuse professionals. This group was also interested in expanding the sites where substance abuse professionals could work and in creating a career ladder. Representatives from various professional associations whose members treat substance use disorders participated in the workgroup. After several months of meetings, specific proposals emerged from the workgroup for the Utah Legislature to consider during the 2012 General Legislative Session. The Utah Legislature later passed H.B. 496: Mental Health Practice Act Revisions. Among other things, this bill: (1) created the advanced substance use disorder counselor license (ASUDC) and changed the name of the licensed substance abuse counselor (LSAC) license to the substance use disorder counselor (SUDC) license; (2) adjusted the qualifications for SUDC licenses; and (3) expanded the types of sites where SUDCs can work. The bill became effective on July 1, 2012.

2. What is the difference between a substance use disorder counselor (SUDC) and an advanced substance use disorder counselor (ASUDC)?

The primary difference between the ASUDC and SUDC license is that an ASUDC may identify substance use disorder symptoms and behaviors and co-occurring mental health issues for the development of a treatment plan. In contrast, a SUDC may only gather information related to an individual's strengths, weaknesses, needs, and substance use disorder symptoms for the development of a treatment plan. Another difference is that an ASUDC can provide supervision to a certified substance use disorder counselor (CSUDC) gathering hours of experience needed to qualify for a SUDC license but a SUDC cannot. Unless an ASUDC or a SUDC hold a second license as a mental health therapist, they cannot diagnose mental illness, including substance use disorders.

3. Who qualifies for an ASUDC license?

Before July 1, 2013, to qualify for an ASUDC license, an applicant must submit an application with a \$85 application fee and demonstrate completion of at least 12,000 hours of substance use disorder counseling experience as a LSAC/SUDC during a period of at least 6 years before July 1, 2013.

SUDCs with bachelor's degrees who will not have completed 6 years of experience by July 1, 2013 may take the following steps to qualify for a certified ASUDC license:

- 1) complete an additional 100 class hours of substance use disorder related education at a substance use disorder education program;

- 2) complete an additional 150 hours of a supervised practicum at a substance use disorder education program;
- 3) complete three pre-requisite courses covering the following subjects if not completed already: human growth and development across the lifespan, general psychology, and human biology; and
- 4) take and pass one of the following exams if not passed already: NAADAC II, MAC or ICRC Advanced Alcohol and Drug (AADC) examination.

Current SUDCs without bachelor's degrees must complete a bachelor's degree in addition to completing the 4 steps outlined above in order to qualify for a certified ASUDC license. Utah schools plan to make available the courses that make up the additional 100 class hours of substance use disorder related education by Fall 2013.

As a certified ASUDC, 2,000 hours of supervised experience in substance use disorder treatment must be gathered in order to qualify for the licensed ASUDC license.

4. If I apply for and obtain an ASUDC license, will I be required to renew my license before May 31, 2013?

No. Individuals who apply for and obtain an ASDUC license will not be required to renew their licenses before May 31, 2013. Their licenses will not come up for renewal until May 31, 2015.

5. Do former LSACs that now hold SUDC licenses under the new law have a different scope of practice?

The scope of practice remains the same; however, the type of sites where they can work has expanded. Under the former law, LSACs were limited to practicing mostly at DHS licensed facilities. They could not practice at private clinics that provided recovery support services. Under the new law, SUDCs may practice at any public or private agency, health care facility, or health care practice that:

- 1) provides substance use disorder services, recovery support services, primary health care services, or substance use disorder preventative services; and
- 2) employs qualified mental health therapists in sufficient number to:
 - (i) evaluate the condition of clients being treated by each counselor licensed under this part and employed by the substance use disorder agency; and
 - (ii) ensure that appropriate substance use disorder services are being given.

6. What licensing options exist for individuals whose education is limited to a high school diploma and do not currently hold a SUDC license?

If an individual whose education is limited to a high school diploma was enrolled in a substance use disorder education program and had completed at least 100 hours of training in the program before July 1, 2012, they fulfill the education requirement for the SUDC license. Individuals with only high school diplomas who enroll in a substance use disorder education program after July 1, 2012 do not qualify for a SUDC license. To

qualify, they must complete either an associate's or bachelor's degree in addition to their high school diploma. To review a complete list of requirements for the SUDC license, review the Mental Health Professional Practice Act (Utah Code 58-60, Part 5) available at www.dopl.utah.gov.