

ABEMFT Newsline



Alabama Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy

The Purpose and Function of ABEMFT

Dr. John Mark Trent, Chairman

Annual Action Report

The following items have been completed since the last publication of ABEMFT Newsline

- ◆ Associate Designation reinstated with successful legislation
- ◆ ABEMFT and AlaMFT have now conducted two annual joint meetings
- ◆ All Application Forms are now offered on the Web Site and grouped by category
- ◆ Application developed for Permission to Sit for the Examination and a Special Accommodations Request Form developed for exam
- ◆ Approved Supervisors posted on Web Site
- ◆ CEU Review Committee established to review non-NBCC approved CEU's.
- ◆ Disaster Recovery Plan adopted
- ◆ ABEMFT expands office space and adds an additional staff member
- ◆ Completed Legal Compliance Audit
- ◆ Rules and Regulations amended
- ◆ Broadcast e-mails to licensees now utilized
- ◆ On-line Renewals launched for the 2006 Renewal Season

“The regulatory board is not here to keep you from getting your license...” That was a comment I made to a very anxious applicant sometime last fall. He was worried about the status of his application and of course a job was in the offing. I realize that anytime our livelihood is perceived to be threatened and/or interfered with, we all get a bit anxious. If there is one thing I would like to see permeate our MFT culture within this state it is an accurate understanding of the purpose and function of the ABEMFT (Alabama Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy) and the process one must go through to be granted a license in marriage and family therapy.

By very definition the sole purpose of a professional regulatory board is to protect the public health and welfare not to promote the

profession of marriage and family therapy within the State of Alabama. A board carries out this purpose by ensuring that the public is served by competent and honest family therapist practitioners and by establishing minimum standards of proficiency in the regulated profession of MFT by examining, licensing, and disciplining family therapist practitioners. Other goals or objectives may not supersede this purpose.

For some reason, I never fully grasped the function and purpose of ABEMFT until I was appointed to serve on the regulatory board. Even my four hour conversation with Dr. Connie Salts (one of our pioneers in the state who wrote most if not all of the original law) prepared me to “get” what the Board was all about. Most of us were not trained in “legal ease” and even the best of us can be a bit confused

with “law language”. Therefore, I encourage you to give us feedback. Let us know where there is misunderstanding; where more clarity is needed; where ease of application can be expedited. A goal of ABEMFT's is to provide a web site and process that is user friendly and can be understood by any graduate student looking for information in becoming a licensed marriage and family therapist.

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**ABEMFT
Alabama Board of Examiners
in Marriage and Family
Therapy**

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ABEMFT Newslines is an official publication of the Alabama Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy. This publication is intended for a wide audience to alert licensees to matters of possible procedural, legal, legislative, and regulatory interest. It should not be relied upon, nor is it intended to provide legal, insurance or accounting advice. Licensees should consult their lawyers, insurance agents, and accountants before taking any action in response to this newsletter, as the opinions expressed herein may be completely altered by the licensees' actual facts.

Report from AMFTRB *Dr. Charlotte Daughhete*

The Association of Marriage and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) had its annual delegate meeting on September 12-14, 2006 in Alexandria, Virginia. Alabama was well represented by John Mark Trent, Alabama Delegate, and myself (Charlotte Daughhete), AMFTRB Secretary. Delegates from 33 states met to discuss MFT regulatory issues. The main theme for the meeting was the importance of safeguarding the public. And while licensure boards should have open communication with professional advocacy organizations, they must never lose sight of their protective role.

An ongoing concern for the member states of AMFTRB is the difficulty of license portability. As Chair of the Portability Committee, I reported on our findings from the past year. Essentially, it would be nearly impossible to have easy portability of licenses across states because state licensure requirements vary greatly. This variance is probably due to the turf battles and concessions that each state had to make while developing and passing the MFT licensure laws.

Rather than portability, it would be more accurate to say AMFTRB is working to ease endorsement.

Possible solutions include development of one document that synthesizes all the state requirements; thus, making it easier for a state board to check for essential equivalency, and the development of an endorsement decision-making flow chart.

A highlight of the meeting was a presentation by D. Russell Crane, Ph.D., COAMFTE Chair. A goal of AMFTRB has been to open up lines of communication with MFT programs. Dr. Crane presented upcoming changes to accreditation standards. COAMFTE is moving toward outcomes based standards that provide proof of program effectiveness. Delegates were concerned that major accreditation changes would be a problem for states that have designed licensure laws around COAMFTE standards. AMFTRB and COAMFTE will continue to dialog about these concerns.

Other issues discussed include: continuing competency of licensed therapists, e-therapy concerns and disciplinary practices. The next annual AMFTRB delegate meeting will be September 5-6, 2007, at the Westin Peachtree Plaza in Atlanta, Georgia.

On-Line Renewals Launched

It may sound surprising, but Alabama is one of the leaders nation-wide in web site development for state government. It is a priority for ABEMFT to be no different. The web site located at www.mft.state.al.us is continuously being amended and improved and is your best resource for board information. On-line Renewals were launched for the first time in

2006. Forget the now antiquated method of manual renewals. You can prevent USPS delays or lost mail by simply going to the web site where you can renew by credit card, debit card, or e-check. A printable receipt is available for on-line renewals instantaneously. We received a disappointing 5% on-line renewal rate for our

first year. Our goal is to reach 100% on-line renewals. It is going to take a partnership to achieve our goals and thanks to the feedback received from many renewing their license this past year, the on-line renewal process will be even more streamlined and convenient for the 2007 Renewal season.

Tid Bits

- ◆ It is important to keep your address (including e-mail) current in order to receive Board notices and information. If you have had a change of address, please submit in writing the updated information to the ABEMFT office.
- ◆ What's the difference between an Associate and an Intern Designation? Interns are completing their education requirements; and Associates have completed their MFT Education and are working on the post degree supervision and passing the examination.

Continuing Education Not NBCC Approved *CEU Committee Members: Charles Alexander & Reina Brashier*

The Board of Examiners in Marriage & Family Therapy has a procedure for receiving approval of Continuing Education contact hours that are not NBCC approved. Everyone is encouraged to attend Continuing Education Units that are NBCC approved. NBCC approved continuing education units have standards previously recognized by AAMFT and AlaMFT.

Occasionally some licensees will choose to attend a seminar or workshop that is not NBCC approved. In order for those contact hours to be approved, you must submit to ABEMFT a form located on our web site. This form is reviewed for approval or disapproval

by a sub-committee of the Board (presently Charles Alexander & Reina Brashier). To be certain of receiving approval you should submit this form prior to the event, although applications will be reviewed after attendance.

The essential features that increase your chances of getting approval are: contents relevant to the theory and practice of marriage and family therapy; clear goals & objectives; specific number of contact hours being requested; a clear indication of the specific seminars you attended; program schedule and certificate signed by the presenter as well as the qualifications of the presenter and the sponsoring organization.

soring organization.

Attention to details will increase your likelihood of receiving approval. Examples of unacceptable applications would include an application that left the number of contact hours requested blank or photo copies of a program that is illegible.

We want you to receive approval for legitimate continuing education experiences that enhance your knowledge and clinical skills as marriage & family therapists. Help us to ensure you receive approval for these learning experiences that hopefully make you a better provider of marriage and family therapy.

From the Desk of the Executive Director *Paula Scout McCaleb*

The Alabama Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AlaMFT) has most graciously accepted ABEMFT's invitation to hold annual joint meetings. We have now held two consecutive annual meetings in conjunction with regularly scheduled ABEMFT Board Meetings. The purpose of meeting on a regular schedule with the Association is to develop better communication. As LMFT's you know how valuable healthy communication is in relationships and the relationships of professional organizations are no exception. Although AlaMFT represents the MFT Industry and ABEMFT represents consumers of MFT services, we share many of the same goals with increased service to licensees topping that list. Under the leadership of John Mark Trent, ABEMFT Chair and Stephanie Puleo, AlaMFT President, these meetings have been extremely enlightening and productive resulting in procedural

changes to ABEMFT including the establishment of an ABEMFT CEU Review Committee (see above article); development of an application to sit for the examination; and applications separated by category. The most important change has been healthy communication—priceless!

ABEMFT's goal is to extend this communication to applicants, licensees, and consumers. Our best tools for this are the *ABEMFT Newslines*, web site, broadcast emails, open board meetings and of course daily staff interaction with the public and licensees.

In the composition of this newsletter, I have noticed one significant thread throughout the articles submitted for publication. The word, "goal" is on the lips

and minds of Board Members and Staff. Though not a planned message, it is an accurate one. ABEMFT has many goals. We have seen the accomplishment of several goals and are encouraged to continue in accomplishing much more including the following:

- ◆ To provide services online so that 90% of license transactions are processed via the web by 2010
- ◆ The continuous improvement of staff (see right) to provide efficient, effective, and ethical service to consumers and licensees
- ◆ Further development of communication with licensees and AlaMFT

ABEMFT welcomes your involvement in communication building and in accomplishing our goals.

ABEMFT Staff & Goals

Jessica Burdette is the Licensing Agent for ABEMFT. She is responsible for processing applications and requests. Ms. Burdette's background is in administration and customer service. She is currently working towards her degree in Business Administration from Auburn University Montgomery.

Paula Scout McCaleb serves as the Executive Director and has eleven years experience as a Professional Regulator. Ms. McCaleb holds a B.S. degree in Psychology from Troy University. In addition, Paula is the President of Leadership Alliance a professional board management firm which represents four state boards in addition to ABEMFT.

Leadership Alliance ensures that all staff receives Continuing Education each year for the improvement of their professional skills. These CEU's total approximately 40 hours a year for each employee in their area of expertise.

ABEMFT keeps a call log to document call return percentages. Currently, calls are returned on average within 90 minutes. Our goal is to return all calls within an hour. Of course voice mails have been reduced significantly with the expansion of staff. In addition to rapid response to calls and emails, ABEMFT ensures that license verifications are processed within seven days.



ABEMFT

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BOARD VACANCIES
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Calendar of Events



Note: All Board Meetings are open to the public. Meetings convene at 9:00 a.m. and are held at Board headquarters located at 7550 Halcyon Summit Drive, Suite 125 in Montgomery. Meetings are subject to change, but will always be advertised on the Board website and on the web site for the Secretary of State (see address above) in accordance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act.

BOARD MEETING DATES

May 11, 2007

(Deadline for applications to be reviewed: April 27th)

August 10, 2007

(Deadline for applications to be reviewed: July 27th)

November 9, 2007

(Deadline for applications to be reviewed: October 26th)

2007 Examination Windows

**May 21, 2007 -
June 16, 2007**

and

**September 17, 2007 -
October 13, 2007**