

ABEMFT *Newsline*



Alabama Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy

ABEMFT Celebrates 10th Anniversary! **Charles E. Alexander, Th.M., LMFT, Chair**

ABEMFT Action Report

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

- ◆ ABEMFT completes Disciplinary Actions
- ◆ ABEMFT and AlaMFT have now conducted four annual joint meetings
- ◆ ABEMFT spoke to MFT Students and Associates at the AlaMFT Convention and developed brochures to address their concerns as follows: "Journey to Licensure" and "Who is ABEMFT"
- ◆ Completed Sunset Review Audit and Passed HB 98 in the 2008 Regular Session to continue the Board for four years.
- ◆ Completed Legal Compliance Audit
- ◆ Rules and Regulations amended to provide for adequate fees to fund the Board
- ◆ On-line Renewals utilized for third year and continuously improved
- ◆ Task Committee established to update the Code of Ethics and Rules and Regulations
- ◆ New Licensees contact information now forwarded to AlaMFT
- ◆ ABEMFT receives four new Board Member Appointments

Congratulations to all of us on our 10th anniversary. Since 1998 Alabama has regulated the practice of marriage and family therapy and we have reason to celebrate. We have just passed our sunset review process and have been approved to operate for the next four years. We have approximately 250 members, and a strong law that approximates qualifications for clinical membership in AAMFT. We have Connie Salts and our first board to thank for our law and its regulations that continue to guide us today. Our membership is stable, although we hope it grows.

Your board is made up of thoughtful and fair minded members who review carefully every application that comes before it and attempts to guide all applicants toward meeting the high standards of licensure that our law requires. Our goal is to deny no one that meets the qualifications for licensure and to protect the public by maintaining minimal levels of competency for licensure and continuing levels of competency for those already licensed through the requirement of 40 CEU's every two years. You can be pleased with the work of your board.

This year's recent renewal and forward will be the first increase in licensure fees in ten years. We on the board struggled might-

ily with maintaining a balanced budget without raising fees. With the unusual circumstances of this year, it was not possible. This year our board received two grievous complaints involving sexual misconduct and the cost of our judicating these cases put us in a position that is requiring an increase in fees for renewal of license. You will notice a \$50 annual increase in LMFT renewal



or an increase from \$200 to \$300. Your renewal of course is for two years. The fact is our licensing fees have been low and in fact less than LPC. We believe we have been fortunate to have only had a few ethical breaches that require legal review and judicial cost. These matters are costly but important to judicate thoughtfully and fairly. You can follow our work in these matters by simply tracking disciplinary actions published on our website and annual newsletter.

Let me encourage you to put our web-site on your favorites and check it regularly. We have every reason to be proud of this site that is updated regularly. You can read the Minutes of every Board Meeting, see the dates of

our meetings in advance and sit in on a meeting if desired (our meetings are public). On-line renewals are now encouraged and we have resolved many of the initial glitches from last year.

I have just returned from meeting with the regulatory board chairs from around the country. I left this meeting proud to represent Alabama. For once our state leads the country with our strong law. Among the many issues that this national gathering attempt to address are: maintaining a strong national exam and improving it, discussing portability/endorsement/reciprocity issues between states, and

maintenance of competency. We remain in dialogue with each other as to how to make it easier to move from state to state.

Finally, let me comment on our competent and helpful staff. Paula Scout McCaleb, our Executive Director and Jessica Burdette, Licensing Agent provide a valuable service to us all by being able to answer questions and guide persons through the process of becoming a LMFT. We are fortunate to have this competent staff. Please do not hesitate to contact our staff or myself as your Chair when need arises. Thank you for providing a valuable service to consumers of marriage and family therapy in Alabama.

ABEMFT
Alabama Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy

Board Members

Chair

Rev. Charles E. Alexander

Vice Chair

Alan Swindall

Member

Dr. K. Blake Horne

Member

Kelly Dorr Moates

Member

Mitzi Sears

Staff

Executive Director

Paula Scout McCaleb

Licensing Agent

Jessica Burdette

Accounting

Brandy VanOrden

ABEMFT Newsline 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.

Third Party Reimbursement for MFT's

Dr. Charlotte Daughhete, Past Board Member & Chair

The Alabama Examiners of Public Accounts periodically surveys Alabama LMFT's about board services and concerns. A consistent theme that emerges from these surveys results is frustration over the lack of third party reimbursement and the lack of provider status for MFT's. Marriage and family therapy has been found to be highly effective and efficient means of treatment for many mental health issues. Even in the face of this evidence, MFT's frequently find themselves left out of provider opportunities. This is an important advocacy issue and it brings into focus the role of boundary distinctions between regulatory boards and professional organizations. Regulatory boards are charged with protection of the public while professional organizations such as AAMFT and AlaMFT promote the profession. Individuals serving on regulatory boards are usually people who have been very active in professional organizations and have lobbied and advocated for the profession for many years. The transition from advocate of the profession to public protector is often complicated, particularly since members of regulatory

boards are also current active practitioners and continue to have professional concerns. Board members must balance these roles and keep a definite boundary between their regulatory functions and their professional interests. This means that regulatory boards cannot actively promote professional issues, instead they must focus on matters directly related to the prevention of public harm. LMFT's have good reason to be concerned about insurance reimbursement and professional equality, and they can make a difference by being active members in professional organizations. Unlike regulatory boards, professional organizations like AAMFT and AlaMFT can lobby and provide a voice for their collective members. With the support of Alabama LMFT's, professional organizations can promote professional equity for MFT's. (Charlotte Daughhete was an ABEMFT Board Member from 2000-2007. She also served as the Secretary of the National Association of Marriage and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards from 2005-2007.)

*Professional
Regulatory Boards
cannot actively
promote
professional issues*

Disciplinary Actions



Keith Parham

Date: May 9, 2008

Violation: (1) CHAPTER 536-X-8-.01(1)(b) – engaging in dual relationships with clients during the therapist client relationship. (2) CHAPTER 536-X-7-.01(4)(n)5 – engaging in an inappropriate relationship with a female client in 2003.

Disposition: License Voluntarily Surrendered and an administrative fine of \$500.00

Mack D. Lyons

Date: May 9, 2008

Violation: On the basis of indictment issued by the Grand Jury for the Circuit Court of DeKalb County, Alabama, finding that sufficient evidence exists to be tried on no less than five (5) felony sexual abuse counts and five (5) misdemeanor harassment counts, the Board emergency suspended license number 223 on March 10, 2008 with a hearing to be scheduled on the following: (1) Section 34-17A-14(a)(2) – violation of ethical standards of a nature as to render the person found by the Board to be unfit to practice marriage and family therapy (2)

536-X-8 – Grounds for Discipline and Ethical Standards and Standards of Conduct of Marriage and Family Therapists.

Disposition: License Voluntarily Surrendered

The Board Members Are Here for You Kelly Dorr Moates, Board Member

I am honored to be a new member serving on the Alabama Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy. I have learned a great deal about the board, and our profession as a whole, in the past few months. The law states the following regarding the purpose of the board: **"It is the intent of this chapter to establish a regulatory agency, structure, and procedures which will ensure that the public is protected from the unprofessional, improper, unauthorized, and unqualified practice of marriage and family therapy."** §34-17A-2.

As well as protecting the public, the board desires our profession of Marriage and Family Therapy to thrive and grow with qualified, ethical professionals. The board members and executive staff located in Montgomery, are avail-

able to support you in doing so. We recognize that applications for any part of the licensure process or renewals of licensure or supervisory status are time sensitive and critical to your livelihood as a professional. We strive to give each part of the process our individual attention to ensure that our profession is protected and will remain respected with the highest integrity in the public eye. The board members value your feedback! Board meetings are posted in advance on the board web site. However, we are always available for your phone calls or e-mails. We would like to hear any comments, both negative and positive, to help us function more efficiently for the benefit of our profession. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you in the years to come!



New Board Members

Dr. K. Blake Horne is an asst. professor of marriage and family therapy at Amridge University and the executive director of The Samaritan Counseling Center of Montgomery, AL. A native of Hawkinsville, Georgia, Blake is a 1992 graduate of Mercer University where he majored in Christianity and History. He obtained a Master's Degree in Family Therapy from Mercer University School of Medicine and a Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy from Florida State University. He also participated in post-doctoral study for three years at the Georgetown Family Center/Bowen Center for Study of the Family in Washington, D.C. He has published several articles in family therapy journals and presented at national venues on topics related to Bowen Family Systems Theory. He is a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and has been a licensed marriage and family therapist in the state of Alabama since 1999. His clinical and research interests include marital therapy, marital reconciliatory behavior, marriages with a dysfunctional spouse, and emotional processes relating to financial management in families. Blake and his wife, Tracy, have been married for 11 years and are members of First United Methodist Church of Montgomery. They are the proud parents of two beautiful girls, Brooke (6) and Arden (2).

Kelly Dorr Moates is a graduate of Auburn University with a Master of Science Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. She is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy. Kelly worked for seven years in Decatur at the Enrichment Center, a non-profit counseling center, where she was the Clinical Coordinator of the Decatur Office. She has recently relocated to Trussville, Alabama where she has begun a private practice. Kelly sees individuals, couples, and families as well as children, adolescents, and adults. She has been married to her husband Scotty for four years and they are expecting their first baby in July 2009.

Mission, Vision, and Values—Oh My! Paula Scout McCaleb, Executive Director

Governor Riley has implemented a program entitled, "Smart Planning" for Alabama Government. Many of you are familiar with the missions of your own businesses, but do you know what ABEMFT's is? Our mission is actually dictated to us by the Alabama Legislature by statute. Our mission is highlighted in bold in the above article by Board Member, Kelly Dorr Moates and essentially is public protection. The ABEMFT has also defined it's Vision, Values, and Goals. They are as follows:

Vision: Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists provide quality therapy to Alabama families, promoting their mental health.

Values: 1. We value the rights of consumers of Marriage and Family Therapy; 2. We value the continuous improvement of board staff; 3. We value public education of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Goals: 1. To provide services on-line so that 90% of license transactions are processed via the web by 2010; 2. Process all requests within seven business days. ABEMFT is held accountable by the Governor to meet our Smart Plan.

We submit quarterly performance reports as well as undergo numerous audits conducted by the Examiners of Public Accounts. There are many layers to Professional Regulation in Alabama which, most citizens and licensees in our state are unaware. We work to make the process look easy, but in reality you can rest assured that any agency in Alabama that deposits their funding into the State Treasury (as ABEMFT does) is held fully accountable, transparent and the system of checks and balances is functional.

So, how are we doing in accomplishing these standards?

Let's start with our goals.

Goals #1: ABEMFT launched on-line renewals three years ago. During this three year period, initial kinks for the first renewals have been remedied and we have implemented your suggestions for how to make the on-line renewal process more user friendly. This technology has been well received and we thank you for this.

Goal #2: For fiscal year 2008, our efficiency goal of processing all requests within seven business days was accomplished. The turn around time for these requests was reduced from fifteen days to seven. In 2009 we are working to reduce it further to only a five day processing time.

We didn't forget about continuous improvement of board staff either. All ABEMFT staff members have received continuing education in their respective fields of expertise for a total number of CEU's as follows for 2008: Paula Scout McCaleb, Executive Director: 36 hours; Jessica Burdette, Licensing Agent: 24 hours; and Brandy VanOrden, Accounting: 34 hours. In addition to our Smart Planning goals, the board also tracks call back times with a goal of returning calls within an hour of receipt. The board has first reduced the number of messages with the expansion of board staff and phone lines. The annual average call back time for 2008 was 58 minutes reduced from a 90 minute average call back time in 2007.

In addition to our goals, CEU's and call back times which are all measured, I think the true measure of how we are doing is did we protect the public this year? I say an emphatic -YES to this crucial question. You need only review the disciplinary actions on the opposite page to answer this. The ABEMFT has taken it's charge of public protection very seriously. This is why we are here and we have had an especially purpose filled season.

It is our privilege to continue to work to provide public protection, exceptional service to licensees and the State of Alabama. I thank you for the opportunity.



ABEMFT

*Alabama Board of Examiners in
Marriage and Family Therapy*

Post Office Box 240066
Montgomery, Alabama 36124-0066
Phone: 334.215.7233
Fax: 334.215.7231
Web Site: www.mft.state.al.us

BOARD MEETINGS AND MEMBER TERMS POSTED AT WWW.SOS.ALABAMA.GOV

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.

2009 BOARD MEETING DATES

May 29th

(Deadline for applications to be reviewed: May 15th)

August 7th

(Deadline for applications to be reviewed: July 24th)

November 6th

(Deadline for applications to be reviewed: October 23rd)

PES Examination Windows

**May 18, 2009—June
13, 2009**

**September 14, 2009-
October 10, 2009**

**January 11, 2010—
February 6, 2010**

**May 17, 2010—
June 12, 2010**

**September 13, 2010—
October 9, 2010**