



SAIGE-NC NEWS

Spring 2023

**Official Newsletter of the Society for Sexual,
Affectual, Intersex, and Gender Expansive
Identities of North Carolina**

SAIGE-NC NEWS



Official Newsletter of SAIGE-NC

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Join Our Lunch & Learn Webinar:
 Anti-Trans State Violence: Counselors Navigating NC Legislative Attacks
 April 17, 2023, 12n-1pm EST

Be on the lookout for our annual newsletter

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST [HERE](#)

*Interested in being a member?
 Register [HERE](#)*

Have a Contribution for the next Newsletter?

Email your submission to:
Whitney.akers@uncp.edu

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2022-2023 Executive Officers

President: Whitney Akers

President-Elect: Angela Brooks-Livingston

Past President: Rebekah Byrd

Secretary:

Treasurer:

Social Media Coordinator: Angela Brooks-Livingston

Newsletter Editor: Whitney Akers

SAIGE-NC News Sections

WELCOME:

Letter from our president

SAIGE-NC Happenings:

News about the Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities of North Carolina

Upcoming Events:

Division news regarding continuing education, division events, and relevant opportunities

Legislative News:

State and national legislative and policy changes directly affecting LGBTGEQIAP+ populations and counselors serving LGBTGEQIAP+ identified clients (no longer than 500 words)

Advocacy & Social Justice:

Exploration of advocacy, social justice, and liberatory approaches pertaining to intersectional LGBTGEQIAP+ populations (no longer than 1000 words)

Clinical Practice:

Counselor educator, counselor supervisor, clinical counselor, and counselors-in-training perspectives on professional and ethical issues related to counseling LGBTGEQIAP+ clients (no longer than 1000 words)

Radical Self-Care:

Resources to enhance counselor and client self-care and wellness and offerings of self-compassion (no longer than 1000 words)

Outstanding SAIGE-NC Members:

Get to know your SAIGE-NC community! We will showcase nominated or self-nominated SAIGE-NC for their work serving LGBTGEQIAP+ communities! Please submit contact information and a photo of the nominee, a short summary of the member's accomplishments (no longer than 200 words).

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WELCOME

Who We Are

SAIGE-NC is a division of NCCA designed to provide information, resources and advocacy for the LGBTGEQIAP+ individuals we serve. We are a community of counselors, students, and other professionals dedicated to increasing awareness of LGBTGEQIAP+ issues and advocating for and with our LGBTGEQIAP+ clients. If interested in becoming more involved with the chapter, please do not hesitate to [reach out!](#)

Letter from Our President Whitney Akers

Dear SAIGE-NC Members,

It is with energy of deep care and gratitude that I write this letter. It has been an incredible honor to serve SAIGE-NC as your President for the 2022-2023 year. During this year, your SAIGE-NC board, Dr. Rebekah Byrd (Past-President), Angela Brooks-Livingston (Social Media Coordinator), and I have worked to grow and enhance our division in ways that align with the national SAIGE organization and further our support of LGBTGEQ+ clients and counselors in North Carolina. In the current sociopolitical climate, our connections, creation of communities defined by mutual care, and collective organizing are critical to our survival and vital to our thriving.

In our state, we are facing the threat of looming legislation that has the potential to: require school officials and counselors to nonconsensually out students to parents who may respond abusively and/or kick youth out of their homes; sweepingly ban access to LGBTGEQ+ affirming books, learning materials, discussions, as well as GSAs in schools (even when the GLSEN 2021 National School Climate Survey data clearly evidences that positive portrayal and representation of LGBTQ+ people reduces anti-LGBTGEQ+ victimization and increases peer acceptance in schools (Kosciw et al., 2022)); and ban access to life-saving, gender-affirming care until the age of 18 (even when parents are supportive of/pleading for their child's access to this care). The consequences of these violent bills, should they be enacted, are immensely destructive to trans youth survival, LGBTGEQ+ thriving, and parental/caregiver rights to pursue life-saving care for their children. Without access to gender-affirming care, trans and nonbinary youth are expected to face increases in depression, anxiety, generalized distress, and suicidal ideation, attempts, and completions. In effect, legislators are working to eliminate trans existence by directly attacking trans, nonbinary, and gender expansive youth in ways that threaten their survival through adolescence and into adulthood.

(continued on next page)

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

WELCOME

Letter from Our President

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We cannot allow this to happen. We have a call to action to stand in solidarity against this legislative violence every step of the way. Your advocacy or activism might look different from your neighbor's, and this is good. We all have unique skill sets, and they are all needed in this work. For example, as mental health professionals serving LGBTGEQ+ clients, we may also be subject-matter experts, and our voices and expertise are needed in this fight. We must understand how these bills are in direct opposition to our code of ethics and standards of care. We must involve our licensure and credentialing bodies and advocate for our provision of gender-affirming clinical care to be protected. We must show up and speak out at legislative sessions and education board meetings. We must be in constant contact with our legislators to ensure they hear our voices and serve the interests of their constituents with their votes. We must advocate for policy change on multiple levels and through a multitude of avenues. We must engage in coalition building to amplify our impact and advocate in ways that are not only trans-liberatory, but also anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and intersectionally-aware. All oppression is connected, and true liberation cannot exist if we continue to participate in practices of domination and subordination. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to practice revolutionary love, care, and liberation. Will you join us?

As an organization, we have been working tirelessly to build energy and community in this work. For example, your SAIGE-NC board offered a session at the 2023 NCCA conference to process pervasive anti-trans legislative violence and how we may navigate this climate as counselors. We also held space for connection and community-building for members during the SAIGE-NC division interest meeting. Thank you to all who joined us. I had tears of gratitude in my eyes as you shared your stories and commitment to heartfelt advocacy.

Additionally, throughout this past year, your SAIGE-NC board has successfully updated division bylaws, changed our name to align with our national division, commissioned new logos, presented at the national and state level, created social media pages, offered SAIGE-NC members discounted, NBCC-approved trainings on supporting gender expansive clients, and doubled our membership. For this work, we were honored with the NCCA 2023 Most-Improved Division Award, but we are not finished! We will again offer a chance to connect, learn, process, and build together in our free lunch-and-learn webinar on April 17, 2023, focusing on the state of NC's legislation and our potential for care and action. Please find more information on p. 14 and join us!

As I come on the close of my presidential year, I am humbled by (Continued on next page)

WELCOME

Letter from Our President

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the outpouring of support and care from you all. It was a deep honor to connect with you at NCCA and to feel your passion for supporting our LGBTGEQ+ kin. I hold abundant gratitude for our members, and I could not ask for a more phenomenal community in this journey. Thank you for letting me serve you and this organization. I am also overwhelmed with joy and appreciation to have served beside my colleagues, friends, and co-conspirators, Dr. Rebekah Byrd and Angela Brooks-Livingston, and I look forward to continuing the incredible work of SAIGE-NC as the wonderful Angela Brooks-Livingston steps into the Presidential role for the 2023-2024 year.

Thank you for all you are and all you do. May we continue building together and inspiring deep compassion, advocacy and care within our communities.

With enormous warmth and in solidarity,
Whitney

Whitney P. Akers, PhD, LCMHC, NCC, ACS (they/she)
President, SAIGE-NC



WELCOME

Meet the SAIGE-NC Board

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President & Newsletter Editor: Dr. Whitney P. Akers

Whitney P. Akers, PhD, LCMHC, NCC, ACS (She/They) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling and the Director of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. A National Certified Counselor, an Approved Clinical Supervisor, and a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (NC), Dr. Akers' clinical experience includes counseling in community agency, inpatient, spiritual care, hospital/integrated care, detention center, school, equine therapy, and private practice settings. Dr. Akers' research interests center on the ways in which people who identify as

LGBTQ+ experience outness, how intersections of queerness and race, class, ability, spirituality, and ethnicity influence mental health and wellness, and how these intersectional lived-experiences are impacted by the current sociopolitical climate in terms of access to safety, survival, and personhood. Additionally, Dr. Akers engages in participatory action research strategies in an effort to support marginalized populations, challenge oppressive power structures, and enhance communal resiliency.

President Elect & Social Media Coordinator: Angela Brooks-Livingston



Angela Brooks-Livingston, MA, LCMHCS, LCAS, CCS (she/they) currently serves Wilkes County as a private practice clinician. They are a graduate of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at Appalachian State University. She worked in community mental health for 9 years before opening a private practice in August 2020. They work with LGBTQ+ clients, especially gender expansive clients. Additionally, Angela offers supervision to clinicians who have a LCMHC-A, LCAS-A, or CADC credential. They teach

adjunct at Appalachian State University, teaching courses including Individual and Family Development, Counseling the Addicted Person, The Addictive Process, and Substance Abuse in the Family System. She is certified as a Resources for Resilience Educator through Resources for Resilience in Asheville, NC.

Angela is an active member of the North Carolina Counseling Association (NCCA), serving as

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

WELCOME

Meet the SAIGE-NC Board

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President 2016-2017. They were honored with the Most Devoted Service Award in 2016 and 2017, and the Ella Stephens Barrett Award in 2020. They currently serve as the Social Media Representative for SAIGE-NC, and will serve as President 2023-2024. She served as the CEU/Education Chair for the NC Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development 2022-2023.

Angela practices soul-care by hiking and camping with her partner, son, and dog; crocheting; practicing Julia Child recipes; reading; and listening to 80s hairbands.

Past President: Dr. Rebekah Byrd



Rebekah Byrd, Ph.D., LPC, (TN), LCMHC (NC), NCC, RPT-S, ACS (she/hers) is an Associate Professor of Counseling and Director of the Institute for Play Therapy and Expressive Arts Education and Research at Sacred Heart University. Dr. Byrd has been a counselor educator for over 13 years and has over 20 years of experience working in the mental health field in varying capacities and settings. She continues providing counseling in private practice work and was recently working in a virtual k-12 setting. Her research specialization falls primarily in issues pertaining to children/adolescent counseling, play therapy, LGBTGEQIA+ advocacy, school counseling, social justice/multicultural concerns, self-injury, and women's wellness.



SEXUAL | AFFECTIONAL | INTERSEX | GENDER EXPANSIVE
N O R T H C A R O L I N A

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

WELCOME

Welcome New Members



Welcome new members! Thank you for being such an important part of our community and story. It is an honor to be in solidarity with you.

SAIGE

**Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex,
and Gender Expansive Identities**

N O R T H C A R O L I N A

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

WELCOME

Our Mission

SAIGE-NC is a division of NCCA designed to provide information, resources and advocacy for the LGBTGEQIAP+ individuals we serve. We are a community of counselors, students, counselor educators, and other professionals dedicated to increasing awareness of issues facing LGBTGEQIAP+ communities and advocating for and with our LGBTGEQIAP+ clients.

Mission

1. To **promote a greater understanding** of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gender expansive individuals among members of the counseling profession.
2. To **improve standards and delivery** of counseling services provided to members of the LGBTGEQIAP+ community.
3. To **identify and work to eliminate conditions which create barriers** to the individual development LGBTGEQIAP+ individuals.
4. To **develop, implement, and/or foster interest in charitable, scientific, and educational programs** designed to further the interests of LGBTGEQIAP+ individuals.
5. To **secure equality of treatment, advancement, qualifications, and status** of LGBTGEQIAP+ individuals in counseling and development work.
6. To **publish scientific, educational, and professional materials** with the purpose of raising the standards of all who work in counseling regarding these issues.
7. To **facilitate a broader awareness of issues in counseling** LGBTGEQIAP+ individuals.

You can find more information regarding **membership** on our website:

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

SAIGE-NC Happenings

SAIGE-NC Division Updates

As of November 2022, SAIGE-NC has officially changed our division name to better honor our diverse communities and align with our national organization's new name.

SAIGE History

In April 2020, our national organization changed their name from the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC) to the **Society of Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities (SAIGE)** in an intentional effort to honor and increase inclusivity of the many diverse identities within our communities. Specifically, SAIGE's name change evidences our commitment to serving non-binary, gender expansive, intersex, and asexual communities, enhancing visibility of our members' and clients' diverse sexual, affectional, intersex, and trans identities.



We have also updated our bylaws and commissioned new logos!

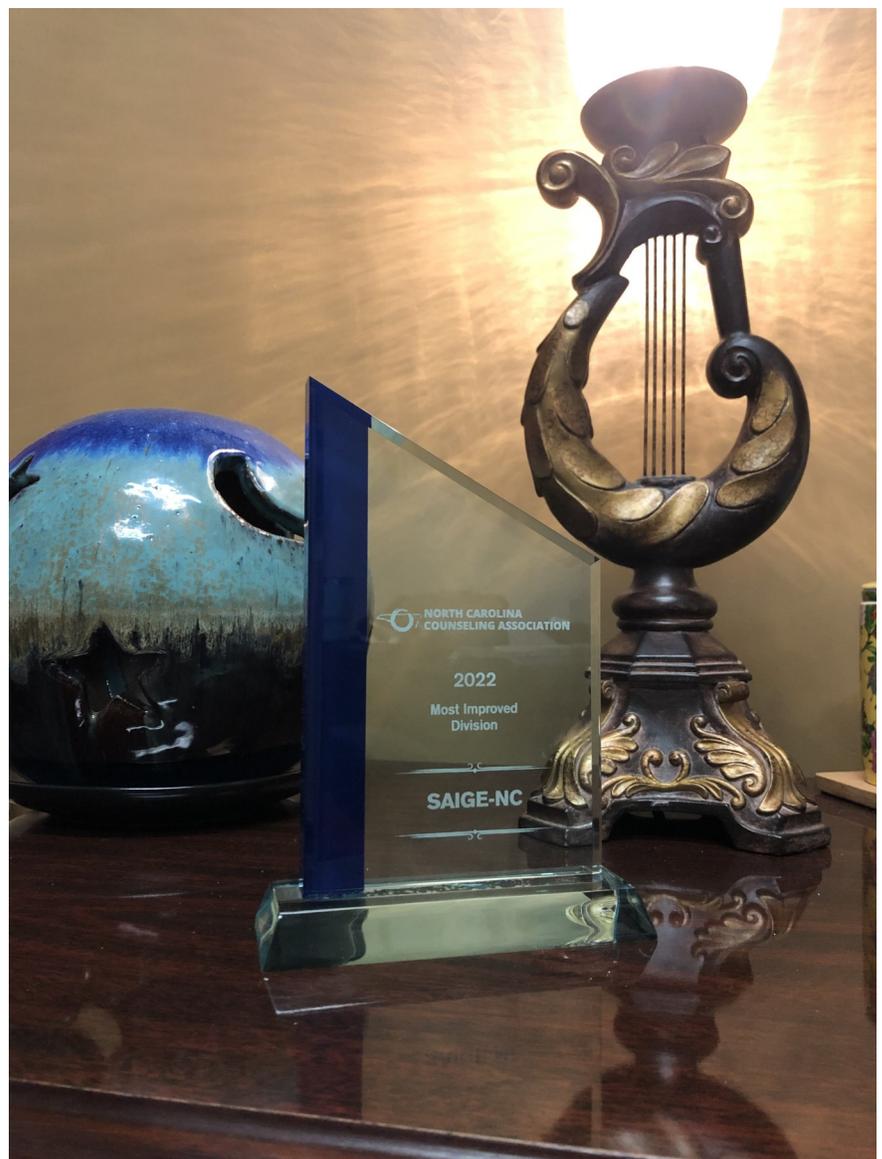
<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

SAIGE-NC Happenings

SAIGE-NC Awarded “Most Improved Division” by NCCA!!!!

At the 2023 NCCA Conference, SAIGE-NC was honored with the Most Improved Division Award! Your board holds abundant gratitude for this recognition, and we are dedicated to continue growing our board, providing member offerings, and building community of care, solidarity, and liberation.

This award was evidence of a deeply collaborative process between all board officers across many years. It is an honor to serve our membership in this way.



Upcoming Events

2023 SAIGE-NC Continuing Education Session Monday April 17, 2023 12:00n-1:00pm EST

2023 Continuing Education Sessions Lunch and Learn Sponsored by SAIGE-NC and NCCA

FREE FOR ALL
Session counts for 1 clock hour

Anti-Trans State Violence: Counselors Navigating NC Legislative Attacks

Objectives:

- 1.) Attendees will explore ways to remain authentic and present while maintaining boundaries within a clinical setting.
- 2.) Attendees will engage with relevant laws, policies, codes, and ethical decision making models to guide clinicians supporting trans and gender expansive clients.
- 3.) Attendees will be able to identify concrete advocacy measures to further re-engage in advocacy and restore the provision of liberatory care within shifting, anti-trans sociopolitical contexts.

Location:

Whitney Akers' Personal Meeting Room
<https://uncp.zoom.us/j/772154657>
pwd=ZWJ1NURRZVkrRTBnTHJTMoY4UE1QQT09

Meeting ID: 477 215 4657

Passcode: sZW8Xx

Presenters: Whitney P. Akers, Angela Brooks-Livingston, & Rebekah Byrd

Questions? Contact Whitney Akers at whitney.akers@uncp.edu if you have questions.

[Register Here](#)

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

Upcoming Events

Community Happenings

Boundaries: How to Build Your Fence

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

5:30PM-6:30PM

Location: <https://uncp.webex.com/meet/whitney.akers>

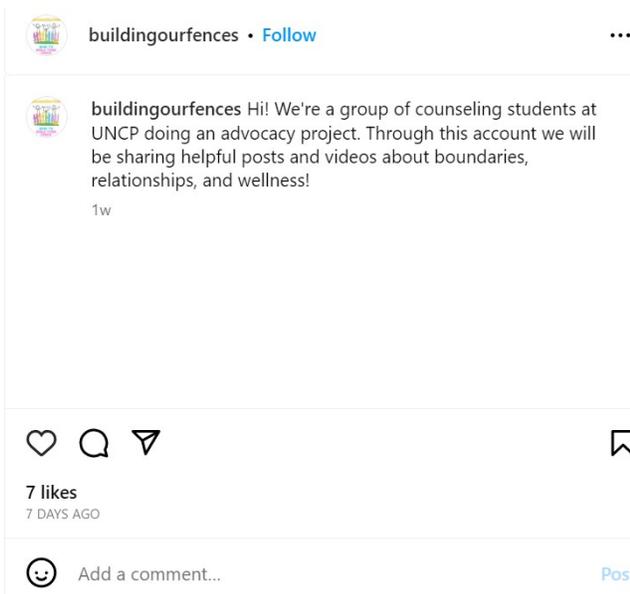
Join UNC-Pembroke Department of Counseling students enrolled in CNS 5080: Gender and Sexuality in Counseling for a virtual training to address boundary setting in relationships. Presenters will explore topics related to healthy vs. unhealthy relationship dynamics, building positive relationships across diverse identities, setting and maintaining your own boundaries, and understanding power and control within relationships. This training is free for all and open to the public.

Students are also creating an Instagram account to teach youth and adolescents about LGBTGEQ+ terminology and boundary setting. Follow @buildingourfences

Boundaries



**HOW TO
BUILD YOUR
FENCE**



Upcoming Events

Community Happenings

(Trans)forming Spaces: Empowering Helpers and Caregivers to Support Trans Youth

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

6:30PM-7:30PM

Location: <https://uncp.webex.com/meet/whitney.akers>

Join UNC-Pembroke Department of Counseling students enrolled in CNS 5080: Gender and Sexuality in Counseling for a virtual training for counselors (PSC and CMHC), teachers, and/or parents on supporting trans, nonbinary, and gender expansive youth populations. Presenters will address relevant terminology, the current legislative climate, and creating spaces of support, safety, and empowerment. Furthermore, presenters will address counselor roles in maintaining confidentiality, honoring youth client identities and identity disclosure, and supporting trans and gender expansive youth with disabilities. This event is free and open to the public.

(Trans)forming Spaces: Empowering Helpers and Caregivers to Support Trans Youth

An educational presentation and discussion led by UNC Pembroke students



**GENDER AND
SEXUALITY IN
COUNSELING**
CNS 5080

For ALL counselors, teachers,
parents, advocates, etc!



Follow link to join:

<https://uncp.webex.com/meet/whitney.akers>

April 26, 2023
6:30 PM

Upcoming Events

Community Happenings

Advocacy Project at Appalachian State University



As part of their advocacy project for their Legal and Ethical Issues in Counseling Course, 3 Appalachian State University students created a toolkit website to encourage counselors in the state to write to the NC Government against proposed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation making its way through the NC house. This site would allow counselors to put in their address, find contact information for their state/local representatives, and they can use the 2 letter templates (one for each bill) as a guide of what to say! We wanted to incorporate some research as well as specific ACA codes these bills would violate, seeing as some of this legislation would impact our field substantially, especially around Gender-Affirming Care and Mandatory Reporting.

The site is: [ncclat.carrd.co](https://www.ncclat.carrd.co) (NC Counselor Legislative Advocacy Toolkit)

Jeremy McDavid is currently a first year Graduate Student in the CMHC program at Appalachian State University. He hopes to work with athletes in the future.

Maddi Dorrill is a second year dual master's degree student in music therapy and clinical mental health counseling at ASU. She received her Bachelor of Music in music therapy from The University of Georgia, and has since worked primarily with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.

Tyler Young is a first year master's student in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at Appalachian State University. They received their Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Appalachian State University, and aim to work with LGBTQ+, Gender Expansive, and neurodiverse populations in the future.

Upcoming Events

2023-2024 Officer Elections

SAIGE-NC will hold elections for open officer positions. Elections will take place from April 5-April 12, 2023. Election results will be finalized by May 1, 2023. Terms will begin July 21, 2023.

Open Position Descriptions

President – Elect (1 year term, then serve as President, then Past-President in following two years)

- a. The President-Elect shall perform the duties of the President in the absence or incapacity of the President as determined by the SAIGE-NC Executive Council
- b. The President-Elect serves as a voting member of the SAIGE-NC Executive Council. The President-Elect, subject to confirmation by the Executive Council, shall appoint chairs and members of Special committees.
- c. The President-Elect shall perform the duties customary to that office and such additional duties as directed by the NCCA Executive Board.
- d. If the President-Elect becomes incapacitated, resigns, or is removed from office, the term is to be completed by the candidate with the next highest vote on the same slate of candidates. Should the President-Elect have run unopposed, the SAIGE-NC Executive Council members shall confer to determine the best course of action.

Social Media Representative (1 year term)

1. Manage any official SAIGE-NC social media accounts (Facebook, Tic Toc, Instagram, etc.)
2. Work with the NCCA organization management representative to ensure the SAIGE-NC website is up to date.

VOTE HERE

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

Legislative News

Let Them Be Who They Are: Update on Anti-Trans Legislation

Bill Stewart, LCMHCA, NCC, MBA

Hello, SAIGE-NC team!

My name is Bill Stewart and I am the Member-at-Large for Government Relations. In that capacity, I am responsible for tracking current or proposed legislation and providing the NCCA board with updates on potential impact to our membership. Along those lines, I have been monitoring the proposed anti-trans legislation that is making its way through the North Carolina legislature. At the recent NCCA conference, I attended an update from SAIGE-NC on these bills and felt the energy and passion in the room. I wanted to provide you with an update on that legislation while asking you to direct your passion and energy into action.

Although there are two active anti-trans bill in various stages of review by the North Carolina legislature, our focus is on all four bills which have been introduced as they show the intent of the legislature and have direct impact on the profession of counseling. NC S.B. 514, the Youth Health Protection Act, was proposed in early 2021 and has not had subsequent activity since April 6, 2021. This bill was intended to prevent medical treatment to present as other than one's assigned sex at birth for minors - defined as anyone under the age of 21. (continued on next page)



Bill Stewart, LCMHCA, NCC, MBA is currently in private practice where he works with a variety of clientele to include veterans and teenagers. He earned his undergraduate degree from Georgetown University and an MBA from Duke University. He completed his Master's of Arts in Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and is a National Certified Counselor. After over 20 years working at Johnson & Johnson, Bill became a counselor in support of his passion to assist the military community. He is a former US Army paratrooper having served in the 82nd Airborne Division. Bill is a board member of the Military and Government Counseling Association of North Carolina and serves as Member-at-Large, Government Relations for the North Carolina Counseling Association.

<https://www.n2ca.org/saige-nc>

Legislative News

Let Them Be Who They Are: Update on Anti-Trans Legislation

Bill Stewart

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This bill also required government agents – to include school counselors – to advise parents of minors who display gender dysphoria or non-conformity. This bill has not had recent activity primarily because it has been replaced by two other bills: NC H.B. 43, Prohibition of Certain Hormone/Surgery/ Minors and NC S.B. 49, Parent’s Bill of Rights.

Our primary focus is on NC S.B. 49 as it prevents discussion of gender, sexual activity, and sexuality in public schools through fourth grade. It also prevents changing of pronouns or name without parental permission for minors which are defined as under the age of 18 in this bill. Finally, the bill enables parents to influence clubs that schools offer and we have seen instances in other states where this type of legislation has enabled the elimination of Gay Straight Alliance clubs and other LGBTQ+ friendly safe spaces. NC S.B. 49 directly impacts counselors who would now be required to out kids who come to them to discuss gender dysphoria. This violates the ACA Code of Ethics which requires that counselors avoid harm and imposing values while also advocating for the needs of our clients. The Code of Ethics establishes our primary obligation as “respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients.” By violating our Code of Ethics, these bills run counter to The Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors Act which establishes adherence to the ACA Code of Ethics as a licensing requirement in North Carolina.

The final bill we are aware of is the NC H.B. 358, The Save Women’s Sports Act which I refer to as the “It Is Only About Winning” Act. This bill states that participation in middle or secondary school sports would be determined based on a person’s assigned sex at birth. Interestingly, the focus – as evidenced by the name of the bill – is on women’s sports because this is really about winning. This bill attracts the most headlines and has created a national debate on this topic with athletes such as Lia Catherine Thomas, a swimmer at UVA. This bill is no longer active as it has been replaced with NC H.B. 43 which would prohibit gender-affirming care (essentially eliminating any trans kids from expressing their gender (continued on next page)

Legislative News

Let Them Be Who They Are: Update on Anti-Trans Legislation

Bill Stewart

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prior to the age of 18). NC H.B. 43 is heavily focused on the medical community and medical procedures and has been consistently opposed by the American Medical Association.

And now, I would like to ask for your assistance as we focus the energy and passion that you feel on this topic in two ways:

1. Get informed and share this information with your peers. As counselors, we are obligated to understand threats to our community and our clients.
2. We intend to engage in a letter writing campaign. I will be working with the SAIGE-NC leadership team to further organize these efforts and to solicit volunteers.

During the SAIGE-NC presentation at NCCA, your leadership team provided updates on these topics and asked how the audience felt. The answers ranged from angry to demoralized. These bills make me feel ENERGIZED to make my voice heard and to stand for my clients. I have been privileged to work with several trans clients recently. When the topic of these bills comes up, I see the fear and concern in their eyes and recognize my obligation to stand for them.

On that note, I leave you with the words of Representative Jamaal Bowman on this topic as seen at https://youtu.be/rb9hj_XIZxk . Let them be who they are!

RADICAL SELF-CARE

Considerations in Self-Care and Self-Compassion: How are you cultivating Self-Compassion Practices?

Rebekah Byrd, Ph.D., LPC, (TN), LCMHC (NC), NCC, RPT-S, ACS

We often discuss self-care and the importance in the field. However, in those conversations, it is important to also consider self-compassion and how these are related. The following is an excerpt from the text:

Byrd, R. & Luke, C. (2021). *Counseling Children and Adolescents: Cultivating Empathic Connection*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Research in the helping profession is clear with regards to self-care; self-care is an essential component of counselor training, personal practice, and professional responsibility (Coaston, 2017; Mayorga, Devries, & Wardle, 2015). Recent research on self-care noted that lower levels of self-care served to actually increase stress levels among counselors in training (Mayorga et al., 2015). Counselors in training will do well to learn self-care practices while in graduate school to benefit from and integrate this as an essential part of the counselor's roles and responsibilities. A study conducted on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) practices and self-care states that:

compared to cohort controls, students in the MBSR program reported significant prepost course declines in perceived stress, negative affect, state and trait anxiety, and rumination, and significant (continued on next page)



Rebekah Byrd, Ph.D., LPC, (TN), LCMHC (NC), NCC, RPT-S, ACS (she/hers) is an Associate Professor of Counseling and Director of the Institute for Play Therapy and Expressive Arts Education and Research at Sacred Heart University. Dr. Byrd has been a counselor educator for over 13 years and has over 20 years of experience working in the mental health field in varying capacities and settings. She continues providing counseling in private practice work and was recently working in a virtual k-12 setting.
Contact: byrdr@sacredheart.edu

RADICAL SELF-CARE

Considerations in Self-Care and Self-Compassion: How are you cultivating Self-Compassion Practices?

Rebekah Byrd

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increases in positive affect and self-compassion. These findings suggest that MBSR may not only lower stress and distress but also enhance the ability to regulate emotional states, as reflected in the declines in rumination. (Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007, p. 111)

Coaston (2017) and Nelson, Hall, Anderson, Birtles, and Hemming (2017) discussed the importance of incorporating self-compassion practices (which includes mindfulness) into our understanding of self-care. Neff (2003) conceptualizes that:

Self-compassion entails three main components: (a) self-kindness – being kind and understanding toward oneself in instances of pain or failure rather than being harshly self-critical, (b) common humanity – perceiving one’s experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as separating and isolating, and (c) mindfulness – holding painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them. (p. 85)

Self-compassion is important for counselors to understand and practice for our own wellness, but also so that we can model this for our clients to enhance their wellness. Additionally, “self-compassion is generally considered the foundation for compassion towards others” (Morgan, Morgan, & Germer, 2013, p. 87). Further, Skovholt et al. (2001), outlined six paths for counselor personal and professional self-care: (a) maximizing professional success; (b) creating and sustaining an active, individually designed development method; (c) increasing professional self-understanding; (d) creating a professional greenhouse at work; (e) minimizing ambiguous professional loss; and (f) focusing on one’s own need for balanced wellness (p. 171). (continued on next page)

RADICAL SELF-CARE

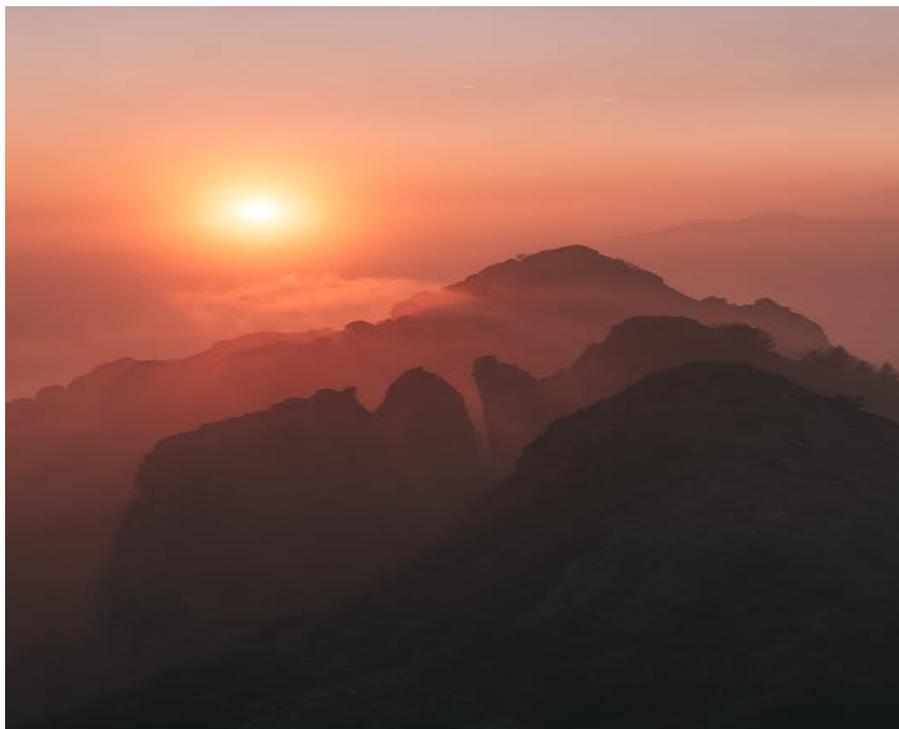
Considerations in Self-Care and Self-Compassion: How are you cultivating Self-Compassion Practices?

Rebekah Byrd

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Growing evidence suggests that self-compassion is a vital aspect of change in therapeutic work and is negatively correlated with both depression and anxiety (Barnard & Curry, 2011). Self-compassion can assist in reduction of psychopathology symptoms and increase mental and emotional well-being (Germer & Neff, 2013); counselors (as well as clients) can get focused on shame, self-criticism, and self-doubt. In these moments, we need the self-compassion that helps us understand how to be careful and kind to ourselves, even in the middle of the pain (Morgan et al., 2013). However, self-compassion takes practice (Byrd & Luke, 2021, p. 10).

How are you cultivating self-compassion practices?



RADICAL SELF-CARE

Think Differently about Self-Care, Practice Soul-Care

Angela Brooks-Livingston, MA, LCMHCS, LCAS, CCS

Starting in graduate school, we hear a lot about self-care being the thing to do to combat compassion fatigue and burn out in the counseling field. We see articles in a variety of counseling magazines about the importance of self-care and making it a priority as a clinician. I have been in the field for 12 years, and have heard about self-care for 12 years. There are often sessions at the NCCA conference regarding self-care. This is an important part of being a therapist because of the weight of what clients bring to us every day. We need ways to recharge, decompress, and fight against vicarious trauma.

My challenge to you is to think about self-care in a different way, think about it as soul-care. My dear friend, Dale McDiarmid, LCMHC and owner of Gaits of Hope in Granite Falls, North Carolina, introduced me to the idea of soul-care several years ago. Soul-care speaks to taking care of those deep parts of yourself, the parts that are down in your body and soul that need more than self-care. Soul-care is what we do to feel we are showing up as our authentic self, connecting to the essence of who we are. Soul-care are those things we know recharge us and keep us safe.



Angela Brooks-Livingston, MA, LCMHCS, LCAS, CCS (she/they) currently serves Wilkes County as a private practice clinician. They are a graduate of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at Appalachian State University. She worked in community mental health for 9 years before opening a private practice in August 2020. They work with LGBTQ+ clients, especially gender expansive clients. Additionally, Angela offers supervision to clinicians who have a LCMHC-A, LCAS-A, or CADC credential. They teach adjunct at Appalachian State University, teaching courses including Individual and Family Development, Counseling the Addicted Person, The Addictive Process, and Substance Abuse in the Family System. She is certified as a Resources for Resilience Educator through Resources for Resilience in Asheville, NC. Contact: angelabrookslivingston@gmail.com

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Angela Brooks-Livingston

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This can be having boundaries around your schedule, saying “yes” to a request by a colleague, daily meditation, journaling, practicing your faith, and going to a monthly consultation. Soul-care replenishes us at a deep, connected place where we feel the core of who we are.

As you think about your own soul-care, find those things that speak and heal your core. Find the things that help you feel connected and build strength to carry the load our clients bring to us. If we practice soul-care, we are able to show up with our authentic selves, and have strength to hold space for the hard conversations. We are able to hold the safe space for someone to process their trauma or confess to a return to substance use. Soul-care can help us show up.



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Dr. Whitney P. Akers PhD, LCMHC, NCC, ACS (she/they) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling and the Director of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Dr. Akers' research interests center on the ways in which people who identify as LGBTQ+ experience outness and how their intersectionally diverse lived-experiences are impacted by the current sociopolitical climate in terms of access to safety, survival, connection, and personhood. Additionally, they engage in participatory action research strategies in an effort to support marginalized populations, challenge oppressive power structures, and enhance communal resiliency. Dr. Akers serves as the Professional Trustee for the national SAIGE Research and Scholarship Committee, the President for SAIGE-NC, a reviewer for the *Journal of LGBTQ Issues in Counseling* and *Teaching and Supervision in Counseling*, and the Vice President for NCAOCA.

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