

Report on Findings and Recommendations

By the

Nebraska Board of Health

on the

Marriage & Family Therapy Proposal

for Certification

By the

American Association of Marriage & Family Therapy

(Nebraska Chapter)

to the

Director of Health

and the

Nebraska Legislature

March 21, 1988

## Introduction

The Nebraska Regulation of Health Professions Act created a three-tier process for the review of proposals pertaining to the credentialing of health occupations. These three tiers are the technical review committees, the Board of Health, and the Director of Health. The Board of Health reviews specific proposals for credentialing only after the technical review committees have completed their reports on these proposals. After the Board completes its reports on the proposals, these reports, and those of the technical review committees are presented to the Director of Health, who in turn prepares his own report on them. All reports are submitted to the Nebraska Legislature for its consideration.

Each of these three review bodies issues reports that represent the advice of their membership on the proposals in question. Each report is a separate, independent response to the proposals, and is in no way dependent upon the reports that have preceded it.

The Board of Health reviews credentialing proposals only after receiving a preliminary recommendation on each proposal from an advisory subcommittee selected from its own membership. This subcommittee met on January 8, 1988, in order to give the full Board its advice on the proposal of the marriage and family therapists. The full Board of Health met on January 25, 1988, and formulated its own, independent report on this proposal. The following pages constitute the body of this report.

## Recommendations

In their original application, the Nebraska Division of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy requested licensure for all practitioners. During the review process, the applicant group modified its original application to request certification. This revised application called for the Professional Counselor's Act to be transformed into an omnibus bill which would have included the applicant group as a coequal profession with professional counseling. The technical review committee recommended against approval of the application in part because of concerns about the need for more liberal exemption provisions for marriage and family therapy practitioners who are members of other credentialed counseling professions. The committee members also expressed the concern that because the Professional Counselors' Act has not yet had sufficient time to demonstrate its effectiveness in protecting the public from harm, efforts at turning it into an omnibus bill are premature. Both the 407 advisory committee of the Board and the full Board of Health concurred with the technical committee's recommendations.

## Discussion

In concurring with the technical committee's recommendations, the 407 advisory subcommittee of the board stated that they, like the members of the technical committee, were concerned about the need for more liberal exemption provisions for those practitioners who were members of currently regulated counseling professions. The current certification proposal would not exempt these practitioners from the terms of the proposal. One Board member stated that it is not fair to require members of other counseling professions to acquire another credential in order to call themselves what they already are. The 407 subcommittee also felt that the Professional Counselor's Act is not an appropriate vehicle for the credentialing of marriage and family therapists.

These concerns were also addressed during the discussion of the full Board of Health on the proposal. However, some Board members stated that they would be supportive of the concept of an omnibus bill if a way could be found to reconcile the differences between the applicants and the members of other counseling professions regarding the issues of exemptions, and the administration of such legislation. One Board member stated that the applicant group should do some "networking" with the members of other counseling professions in order to resolve these outstanding disagreements. Some Board members felt that there was a need for the applicant group to open its ranks to the members of other counseling professions who do marriage and family therapy. Networking could pave the way for a broadening of the base of support of the applicant group.

After the discussion was completed, the full Board of Health recommended against approval of the proposal for certification of marriage and family therapists. Janet Coleman moved that the Board endorse the report of its 407 subcommittee on the proposal. Jack Clark seconded the motion. Voting aye were: Quinn, Williams, Shapiro, Coleman, Nelson, Adickes, Bartels, Masek, Kenney, Clark, Voss, Rhodes, and Hilkemann. Marcum abstained from voting. There were no nay votes. By their action, the Board of Health recommended against the approval of the proposal.