



# Orientation to Professional Counseling

Past, Present, and Future Trends

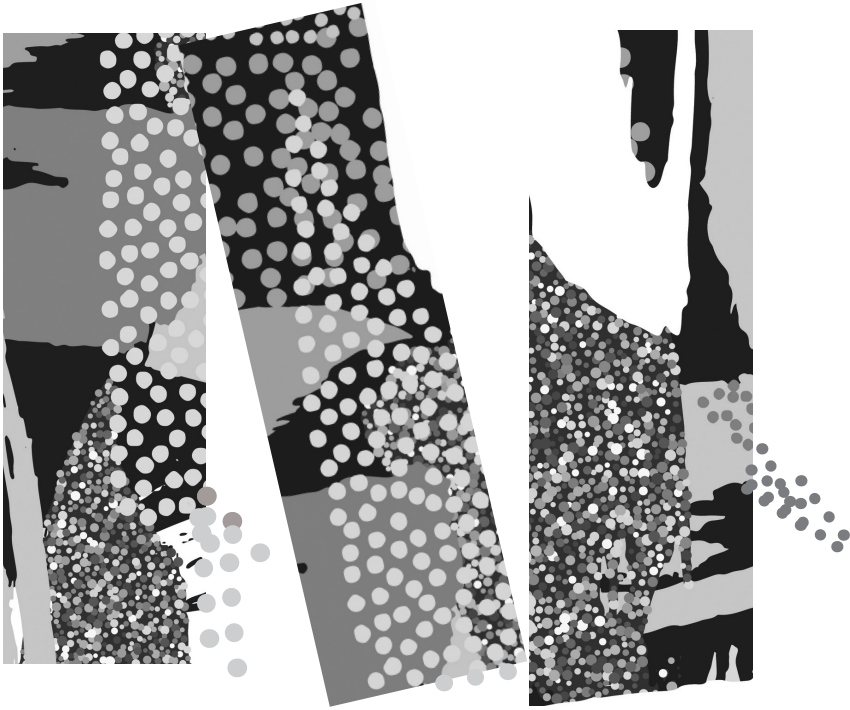
edited by **Sylvia C. Nassar** and **Spencer G. Niles**



AMERICAN COUNSELING  
ASSOCIATION

**WILEY**





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AMERICAN COUNSELING  
ASSOCIATION

6101 Stevenson Avenue • Suite 600

Alexandria, VA 22304

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# Orientation to Professional Counseling

## Past, Present, and Future Trends

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# Foreword

*Courtland C. Lee*<sup>1</sup>

I have been a counselor educator for 38 years. I have seen and used a number of orientation to the counseling profession books in my preparation of counselors at several leading universities. These books have always served a useful purpose in helping give students an overview of the profession as they prepare for their counseling careers. When introducing beginning students to the profession of counseling, I ask myself the following: What is it that I want them to know? How do I begin the socialization process that will ultimately result in knowledgeable professional counselors? The answers to these questions usually focus on ensuring that students get an understanding of the foundations of the profession, an overview of the specialties that make up the profession, and an examination of current issues that impact the personal and professional development of a counselor. Over the years I have observed that an understanding of these three areas provides a solid professional foundation in the training and development of counseling students.

This book, edited by Sylvia C. Nassar and Spencer G. Niles, colleagues of long standing whose careers I have watched grow in stature over the years, hits the mark in all three of these areas. For me, this book represents the next generation in the introduction to the counseling profession text genre. With *Orientation to Professional Counseling: Past, Present, and Future Trends*, the editors have enlisted an impressive collection of individuals to introduce readers to the foundations of counseling, the specialties that enrich the profession, and current issues that impact counselors both professionally and personally. I know and have worked closely with many of the contributors to this

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<sup>1</sup>Courtland C. Lee is a professor in the Counselor Education Program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Washington, DC, and served as American Counseling Association President, 1997–1998.

book over the years and can attest to the fact that they are scholarly leaders in the counseling profession and provide keen insight into their respective subject areas.

The contents of this book also reflect issues that professional counselors will confront in the highly technical, culturally diverse, globally interconnected world of the second decade of the 21st century. The chapters in each of the three sections of the book reflect the realities of this contemporary world as they relate to the profession of counseling.

Section I explores the foundational elements of professional counseling, including ethics, multicultural competency, individual and group counseling, and assessment and research in counseling. Any individual beginning a career as a professional counselor must be anchored in these elements, and the chapters in this section provide this foundational framework.

Section II looks at a number of the counseling specialties that form crucial pieces of the broad quilt that can be considered the counseling profession. Although each chapter makes a cogent case for the significance of the specialty, the overarching theme throughout this section of the book is that counseling is in reality a unified profession.

Section III places the book in its place in time—the end of the second decade of the 21st century. The chapter contributors in this section do this by examining current issues that impact the evolution of the profession and the ongoing development of counselors.

As I reflect on the excellent work that Nassar, Niles, and the contributors to this book have done, I am struck by the myriad issues and trends that swirl around the profession of counseling, for example, multiculturalism and social justice, licensure and certification, accreditation, health care legislation, counselor advocacy, best practice, just to name a few. These issues and trends present those of us who prepare counselors with the challenge of orienting our students to the profession within the context of the questions I posed earlier. I am pleased that the American Counseling Association took up this challenge by publishing this book and entrusting its completion to two preeminent leaders in the field.

# Preface

## How This Book Came About

This book was years in the making. Really, when we think about it in retrospect, we can recount our very earliest conversations about the counseling profession and our unique and distinct perspectives, which evolved in tandem with the profession itself.

For Sylvia, this included perspectives gained over several terms on the National Board for Certified Counselors, over several terms on the state licensure board and as state board ethics chair, as a section and then senior associate editor of the *Journal of Counseling & Development*, as a member of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) 2016 Standards Revision Committee, and most recently as an appointee to an Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development committee to revise the Multicultural Counseling Competencies.

For Spencer, it included his roles and perspectives as a several-term journal editor (of the *Journal of Counseling & Development* and *The Career Development Quarterly*), a several-term president of the National Career Development Association, and president of Chi Sigma Iota.

Both of us were professional counselors and subsequently career academicians. Both of us have been in roles as administrators of counselor education programs. Both of us have received numerous awards and distinctions throughout our careers, and both of us have published extensively in the counseling literature. Both of us have consulted nationally and internationally on professional counseling, credentialing, and competency development.

In our combined and overlapping tenures, we have witnessed the emergence and development of professional counseling—from the early battles for state licensure and other professional recognitions to competency and standards development, to the quickly emerging need for and implications of policy work at the national and international levels.

The rationale for, and relevance of, this text is that it provides both a historical perspective as well as—and more important—a comprehensive

overview of the critical current issues for contemporary counselors-in-training. Fully aligned with 2016 CACREP Standards, it introduces all of the content areas identified as being practiced by counselors in the United States today. It also orients beginning counselors to the range of specialty areas currently encompassed by the counseling profession and underscores the core content and expertise common within a unified counseling identity. We believe that this perspective is critical in fostering and strengthening a unified identity among all counselors and essential to ensuring the success of the counseling profession, both nationally and globally.

## **Overview of the Book**

Early on in the development of this project, we made two key decisions. First, we decided that the book would be an edited volume—that is, chapter authors would be identified and invited based on their expertise and prominence regarding the particular content of the chapter. Although both of us, as textbook editors, have expansive experience and perspectives, we decided that it was important that the voices of experts in specific content areas be represented throughout the text. Thus, the array of chapter authors and their historical contributions to the field, both individually and collectively, are daunting. These authors are truly the leaders of the profession as we now know it!

Second, we made the commitment to align the text as fully as possible with the 2016 CACREP Standards. Other texts may incorporate and cite the standards, but they reflect the authors' or editors' perspectives on key topics and content within the field. Although our perspectives and those of the chapter authors are certainly represented, we defer to the current CACREP Standards as representing those of the counseling profession, and it is our intent to fully support them in our orientation to professional counseling as well as to support past, present, and future trends.

We believe that you will find our textbook both stimulating and engaging. The chapters are generally written in the first person and speak directly to their counselor-in-training audience. Each chapter includes learning objectives, learning activities, review questions, and supplementary resources. Section I (Foundational Elements of Professional Counseling) chapters intersperse thought questions, brief case examples, and implications for practice throughout. Section II (Counseling Specialties) chapters incorporate both the contextual and practice dimensions to reflect those same dimensions in the 2016 CACREP Standards. These chapters additionally include voices from the field (perspectives from practicing professional counselors in their respective areas of expertise) as well as special considerations. Finally, Section III (Current Issues for Personal and Professional Development) chapters incorporate, again, voices from the field as well as rich opportunities for self-reflection for counselors-in-training.

# Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the wealth of information we have gained from each of the professional counselors who have crossed our paths daily over the past three decades and dedicate this book to all of the future counselors who aspire to join our profession. Furthermore, we thank the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs for its visionary leadership and the professional standards it promulgates for and on behalf of the counseling profession and thus for providing the basis for the current text. We also thank the American Counseling Association, Chi Sigma Iota, the National Board for Certified Counselors, and the myriad other counseling organizations that promote the professionalization of counseling. Last but in no way least, we give our unending thanks to Aisha Al-Qimlass, who served tirelessly as the editorial project manager for this text, and to the American Counseling Association editorial staff for its gentle patience and support throughout the project.



## About the Editors

**Sylvia C. Nasser, PhD**, is currently a professor and doctoral program coordinator of counselor education at North Carolina State University. She earned her doctorate in counseling and counselor education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1994 and her master's degree in guidance and counseling in 1984. She has served in a variety of clinical mental health, school, and college settings over the past 30 years, and her initiatives have included promoting the professionalism of counseling and counselor education. Her scholarship spans multicultural, gender, and career development issues, with a special focus on Arab American acculturation and ethnic identity development. She has published nearly 90 books, refereed articles, and other instructional materials and delivered more than 100 conference presentations. Dr. Nasser recently served on the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development's Multicultural Counseling Competencies Revision Committee and on the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs 2016 Standards Revision Committee. She has served as board member for the Census Information Center Advisory Board to the Arab American Institute, the National Board for Certified Counselors, and the North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors. She is past associate editor for multicultural issues for the *Journal of Counseling & Development*, for which she currently serves as senior associate editor. Her recent National Science Foundation and National Aeronautics and Space Administration–funded projects have examined career stereotyping and evaluated curriculum tools. Dr. Nasser's undergirding areas of scholarship and consulting include acculturation, advocacy, career development and underrepresentation issues, program evaluation, clinical supervision, and internationalization. She has provided training and consultation on such issues to international colleagues at institutional and governmental levels in Canada, Finland, Germany, Lebanon, Mexico, and Qatar. She received the Extended Research

Award from the American Counseling Association in 2013 and the Distinguished Service Award from the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision in 2016. She was named the Michael G. Morris Endowed Chair in Eastern Michigan University's College of Education for 2014–2015 and Research Triangle Institute International University Scholar for 2016–2017.

**Spencer G. Niles, PhD**, serves as dean of and professor in the School of Education at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Previously he served as distinguished professor and department head for the Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education at The Pennsylvania State University and professor and assistant dean in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Dr. Niles is the recipient of the National Career Development Association's (NCDA) Eminent Career Award; an NCDA Fellow; a Fellow of the American Counseling Association (ACA); a recipient of ACA's Thomas J. Sweeney Award for Visionary Leadership and Advocacy, President's Award, David K. Brooks, Jr., Distinguished Mentor Award, and Extended Research Award; and a recipient of the University of British Columbia Noted Scholar Award. He has served as president of NCDA (2003–2004), president-elect of NCDA (2017–2018), and president of Chi Sigma Iota (2016–2017); is a board member of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy; was a two-term editor of *The Career Development Quarterly* and the *Journal of Counseling & Development*; and currently serves on numerous journal editorial boards. He has authored or coauthored approximately 130 publications and delivered more than 150 presentations on career development theory and practice.

Dr. Niles is an honorary member of the Japanese Career Development Association, an honorary member of the Italian Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, and a lifetime honorary member of the Ohio Career Development Association. He has conducted career counseling training in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates. His current research addresses creating and sustaining hope in career and life planning among marginalized populations.

# About the Contributors

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**Thelma Duffey, PhD**, is a professor in and chair of the Department of Counseling at the University of Texas at San Antonio and immediate past president of the American Counseling Association (ACA). Dr. Duffey was the founding president of the Association for Creativity in Counseling, a division within the ACA, and is editor of the *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*. Dr. Duffey served as guest coeditor of the *Journal of Counseling & Development* special issue on counseling men and the *Journal of Counseling & Development* special section on relational-cultural theory. Dr. Duffey, an ACA Fellow, has received numerous leadership and research awards from professional organizations, such as the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; the ACA; the Texas Counseling Association; the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; the Association for Creativity in Counseling; the Texas Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; and the Association for Assessment, Research, and Counseling. She has more than 60 peer-reviewed publications and three edited and coedited books: *Creative Interventions in Grief and Loss Therapy: When the Music Stops, a Dream Dies*; *A Counselor's Guide to Working With Men*; and *Child and Adolescent Counseling Case Studies: Developmental, Relational, Multicultural, and Systemic Perspectives*.

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Holcomb-McCoy, a Fellow of the American Counseling Association, is the author of the best-selling book *School Counseling to Close the Achievement Gap: A Social Justice Framework for Success*.

**Virginia A. Kelly, PhD, LPC**, is a professor at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut. Her primary area of scholarly interest is addictions, specifically the ways in which addiction impacts families. She teaches classes in research, assessment, and addiction in the family.

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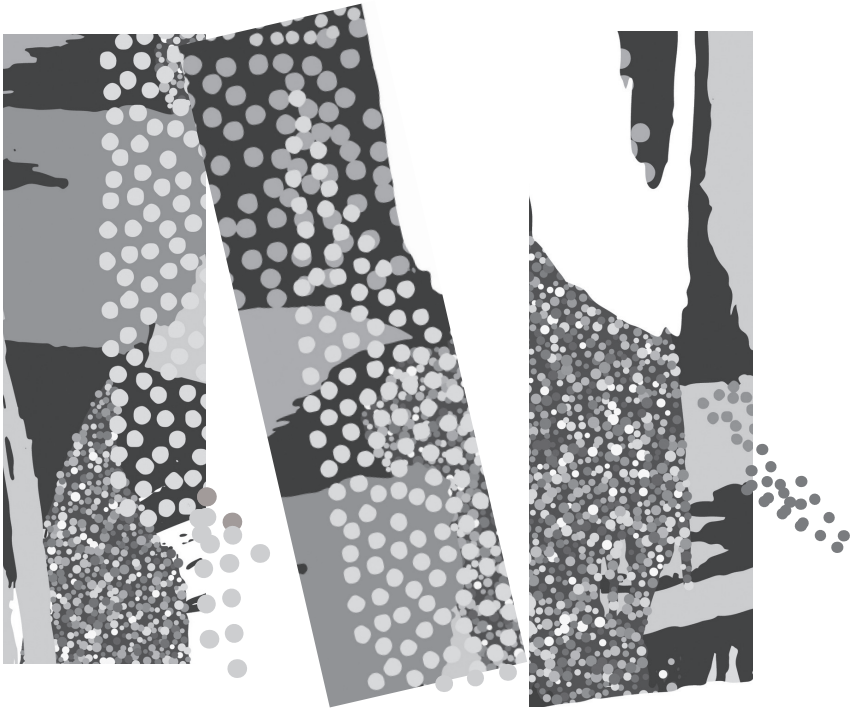
**Jeffrey Strozier, MA, LCPC**, is a doctoral candidate at the University of New Orleans. His research interests include experiential trainings, empathy development, and serious mental illness. He has extensive experience providing community-based counseling to persons with serious mental illness.

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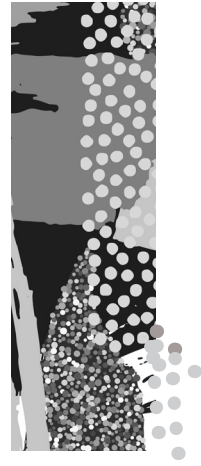




## Section I

# Foundational Elements of **Professional Counseling**





## Chapter 1

# Professional Counseling and Ethical Practice

*Barbara Herlihy, Matthew Lyons, and Jeffrey Strozier*

### Learning Objectives

1. Understand the history and core values of the counseling profession.
2. Gain knowledge of major professional organizations and understand how they serve individual counselors and the profession as a whole.
3. Understand the primary activities of professional counselors and the importance of ethical practice.
4. Understand what it means to be a professional counselor.



Counselors make a unique contribution to promoting mental health and wellness for individuals, families, groups, and communities in contemporary society. This is an exciting time to be entering the counseling profession. If you are like most counselors, you will derive a strong sense of fulfillment from your work and from knowing that you have made a difference in the lives of others (Remley & Herlihy, 2016). You will find opportunities to practice counseling in schools, universities, community agencies, psychiatric hospitals, substance abuse treatment facilities, juvenile and adult justice programs, private

practice offices, and other diverse settings. The job market for professional counselors is promising. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016a) projects a positive growth of 19% for mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists over the next decade. This means the addition of 31,400 jobs. The median annual salary was \$41,880 in 2014, and the top 10% earned \$68,790. The projected growth for school and career counselors, who are listed separately in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, is not as high at 8%; however, the median annual salary is higher at \$53,660, with the top 10% earning \$87,640 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016b).

You should understand that these employment opportunities have been hard won. Counselors are relative newcomers to the field of mental health care compared to other mental health professionals (such as psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists), and it has taken many years of sustained effort in the professional, political, and legislative arenas for counseling to establish itself as a separate profession. Having a sense of our origins will help you gain an appreciation for the current status enjoyed by counselors in the United States. We begin this chapter with a brief history of the counseling profession, and then we explain our unique philosophy. We discuss the importance of professional organizations and of credentialing. We introduce the ethical standards in which our profession is grounded. Finally, we describe the work of the counselor by highlighting some of the major professional activities in which counselors engage.

## **A History of the Counseling Profession**

No two descriptions of the origins of the counseling profession are alike; various writers have emphasized different historical events and have interpreted them through their own lenses. It is difficult to identify a distinct starting place for our profession because counseling evolved from several diverse fields. Most historians suggest that early ideas about the need for counseling emerged in the climate of the early 20th century, when U.S. society was undergoing a number of changes due to industrialization, social reform, population growth, a burgeoning immigrant population, and realization of the ideal of education for all citizens. Three social movements that occurred at that time can be identified as forerunners of counseling as we understand it today: vocational guidance, school guidance and counseling, and the mental hygiene/mental health movement. Several decades later, counseling psychology emerged as a specialty within the field of psychology; this development had an equally strong influence on the counseling profession.

Frank Parsons, who is often acknowledged as the father of the vocational guidance movement, was one of many social reformers in the early 20th century who sought to make the United States a

better place to live and work. He founded, directed, and served as a counselor at the Vocational Bureau in Boston, which opened in 1908 with the purpose of helping the burgeoning population of immigrants who were looking for work (Glosoff & Schwarz-Whittaker, 2013). In his book *Choosing a Vocation* (1909), he proposed that people must consider their interests, skills, and qualifications if they are to be happy and successful in a particular career.

Whereas some historians see vocational guidance as the earliest impetus for the development of counseling, others see the school setting as the first home for the profession (e.g., Sweeney, 2001). An early pioneer in school guidance and counseling was Jesse B. Davis, a progressive school superintendent in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who incorporated vocational guidance into the high school curriculum in 1907. Similar vocational guidance services were created at much the same time in other regions of the country (Glosoff & Schwarz-Whittaker, 2013). Throughout the 1920s, organized secondary school guidance programs, which were usually modeled after college student personnel programs, emerged with increasing frequency.

At much the same time that the vocational and educational guidance movements were taking root, a dramatic shift took place in society's view of mental illness (Erford, 2014), which led to the mental hygiene movement. The catalyst was the publication of an autobiography titled *A Mind That Found Itself* (1908) by Clifford Beers, who had been treated for mental illness under deplorable conditions in psychiatric institutions. His reform efforts led to more humane treatment for people suffering from mental illnesses.

The Great Depression of the 1930s created an impetus for further development of vocational guidance, as there was a clear need for vocational and career counseling to assist the millions of adults and youth who had suffered loss of employment (Ohlsen, 1983). E. G. Williamson and his colleagues, working with university students, developed what is thought to be the first theory of career counseling, which came to be known as the *Minnesota model* (Gladding, 2013). In this model, traits of individuals were matched with those of various occupations in a directive, counselor-centered approach.

The two world wars provided an impetus for the development of both psychological testing and mental health treatment (Glosoff & Schwarz-Whittaker, 2013). At the onset of World War I, the Army commissioned the development of psychological tests in response to the need to screen large numbers of personnel. After World War I, psychological testing became pervasive in personnel work in business and industry and in education, to the extent that testing and counseling were often considered synonymous (Glosoff & Schwarz-Whittaker, 2013). After World War II, it became evident that returning soldiers needed help dealing with what was called *battle fatigue* or *shell shock* (now termed *posttraumatic stress disorder*). The War Department

established a counseling program, and the Veterans Administration also established counseling centers within their hospitals (Shertzer & Stone, 1981). As a result of increased recognition of the need to treat mental health problems, the National Mental Health Act of 1948 was enacted.

Another seminal development during this era was a growing awareness in the United States of Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, which was the first systematic and comprehensive approach to psychotherapy. Freud's theory ushered in a new way of thinking about mental health and mental illness.

The decade of the 1950s saw a number of significant developments that advanced the counseling profession. Recognition of the value of school counseling increased after the Soviets launched Sputnik, the first satellite (Erford, 2014). U.S. politicians feared that their country was losing the space race, which led to legislation that funded substantial programs aimed at encouraging high school students to seek careers in math and science. Title V of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 provided grants to offer counseling services in high schools and to train school and career counselors. As a result, the number of school counselors increased dramatically.

In 1951, Carl Rogers published *Client-Centered Therapy*, in which he proposed his theory of nondirective counseling (now called *person-centered counseling*). Rogers's ideas that clients, rather than their therapists, were the experts on their lives and that clients would move in a positive direction in a counseling relationship that conveyed certain therapeutic conditions offered an alternative to the then-existing approaches of directive vocational counseling and psychoanalysis. Perhaps more than any other person, Rogers influenced how counselors interact with clients (Gibson & Mitchell, 2008).

Also during the 1950s, Thorazine, a medication that alleviates symptoms of severe mental disorders, was discovered, enabling the release into the community of large numbers of individuals who had been institutionalized in state hospitals. The continuing deinstitutionalization of persons with mental illness provided the impetus for the enactment a decade later of the Community Mental Health Act of 1963, which called for establishing comprehensive community mental health centers across the country (Fuenfhausen, Young, Cashwell, & Musangali, 2016). This act was expanded in 1975, creating an increased need for community mental health counselors.

The later decades of the 20th century were marked by the expansion, diversification, and professionalization of counseling. Whereas the three main approaches to counseling had been psychodynamic (Freudian), directive, and client centered (Gladding, 2013), many new approaches emerged during the 1960s, including cognitive behavior, rational emotive, gestalt, reality, and existential therapies (Neukrug, 2011). In 1964, the National Defense Education Act was expanded

to include training counselors to serve clients from elementary school through junior colleges. By 1967, almost 20,000 school counselors had been trained as a result of this act (Tolbert, 1982). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensured that vocational rehabilitation services would be available to individuals with disabilities, increasing the need for counselors trained in the specialty of rehabilitation counseling.

Several events occurred during the second half of the 20th century that furthered the professionalization of counseling. In 1952, four existing professional organizations merged into the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA), now the American Counseling Association (ACA). The association grew in the ensuing decades to reach a membership of 40,000 (Neukrug, 2011), and several new divisions were formed. One division, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, began to offer suggested training standards for master's-level counseling programs. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was formed in 1981 to continue to define standards for education and training. National credentialing was initiated with the establishment of the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) in 1973 and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) in 1981. State licensure began in 1976, when Virginia became the first state to license counselors. The state licensure movement continued to gain momentum, moving toward the goal of achieving counselor licensure in every state.

Before we conclude our history tour, it is important to acknowledge the profound influence of counseling psychology on the development of the counseling profession. From the mid-20th century onward, our profession basically shares its history with the emergence of counseling psychology as a specialty within the psychology profession (Goodyear, 2000). At the same time that APGA was being formed in 1952, counseling psychology was emerging as Division 17 of the American Psychological Association (APA). Counseling psychology distinguished itself as a specialty concerned with addressing the normal adjustment needs of clients, in contrast to clinical psychology, which focused on individuals with chronic and severe mental disorders. For many years, it was not uncommon for therapists to affiliate with both APGA and Division 17 of APA, and counselor trainees studied much of the same literature as counseling psychology trainees. Although many similarities still exist, an important difference between counselors and counseling psychologists is that a doctorate was established as the required degree to practice as a psychologist, whereas counselors practice with a master's degree. Unfortunately, in the 1970s, marketplace politics led APA to launch an initiative to establish state legislation that would limit the practice of counseling to doctoral-level psychologists or those working under their supervision (Sweeney, 2001). Of course, counselor organizations opposed such

efforts. This generated a great deal of tension between counseling and counseling psychology, which is ongoing.

Today, people seeking mental health services can choose from a variety of providers—not only counselors and psychologists but also clinical social workers, psychiatrists, marriage and family therapists, and other specialists. Practitioners of all of these professions are similar in that all are trained at the master's degree level or higher and all provide mental health services for clients (Remley & Herlihy, 2016). Important differences exist, however, and when you become a counselor, it will be vital that you understand the differences among mental health professionals and are able to articulate the unique identity and services of counselors. The primary difference is that counselors espouse the wellness model, a philosophy described in some detail in the next section. In addition, differences among the various mental health professionals are reflected in their training and preparation. The psychology curriculum reflects a focus on understanding human behavior and emphasizes assessment and research. Social work training focuses on improving clients' lives by advocating for social justice and the eradication of poverty and emphasizes linking clients to social services. Counselor training emphasizes the learning of counseling skills. Most counselor training programs are located in schools or colleges of education, and the requirements for a master's degree are substantial compared to those in other degree programs. Your program of study entails 48 to 60 credit hours or more and prepares you in eight essential areas of knowledge and skill. It includes an extensive field experience during which you will practice counseling under close supervision. Your professors are counselor educators who promote a strong professional counselor identity (Gladding, 2013) that is grounded in the wellness model. Throughout your training program, your professors aim to ensure that you also will have a strong professional identity and take pride in your profession (Remley & Herlihy, 2016).

In the 21st century, counseling has continued to make advances on many fronts to establish itself as a unique profession. Counselor licensure is now a reality in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The American Association of State Counseling Boards, founded in 1985, is working to achieve license portability, so that counselors who are licensed in one state can be licensed in other states as well. ACA (originally APGA) remains the largest association representing counselors, with more than 53,000 members and 20 divisions as of 2017. A task for the future is to find a way to unify counselors who identify with diverse specialties under a shared umbrella organization. An important step toward unification was taken recently with the merger of ACA and CORE, the organization that credentials rehabilitation counselors. CACREP and NBCC continue to provide leadership in the setting of training standards and in national testing and certification, and both of these

organizations as well as ACA are providing leadership as counseling becomes more globalized.

## **The Philosophy of the Counseling Profession**

Although there are similarities between counseling and other mental health professions, the values and beliefs underlying our profession are what set us apart (Neukrug, 2011). Key concepts in understanding the philosophy of the counseling profession are wellness, developmental perspective, prevention, and empowerment (Remley & Herlihy, 2016).

If you are to be an effective advocate for the counseling profession, you will need to understand and be able to explain the differences between the wellness model and the medical or illness model of mental health. The medical model was created by physicians to guide them in treating people with physical illnesses. Older mental health professions such as clinical psychology, psychiatry, and social work came into existence when the medical model was prevalent, so they have their roots in this model. Although we are oversimplifying here, it can be said that mental health professionals who operate from the medical model begin by diagnosing a mental disorder, and then they apply scientific knowledge to cure the disorder or reduce its symptoms. Underlying assumptions of this approach are that the client is ill or diminished in some way and that the mental health professional is the expert in ameliorating or eliminating the client's symptoms. Counseling, a newer profession, is grounded in the wellness model. Rather than focusing on the mental illness, counselors take a more holistic perspective and recognize that mental health exists along a continuum: At one end are individuals with severe and chronic mental illnesses, and at the other end are self-actualizing people who practice wellness in their lives. We encourage you to learn more about the wellness wheel of counseling (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000), which is holistic and takes into consideration multiple areas of a person's life, such as relationships, spirituality, career or job, and leisure activities. We also encourage you to personally apply what you are learning about wellness by considering the questions in Sidebar 1.1.



### **Sidebar 1.1 Reflection**

As a counselor who espouses the wellness model, how important is it that you practice wellness in your own personal and professional lives?

Make a list of good self-care habits that you can cultivate while you are in graduate school. Which of these habits will you commit to starting or improving on today?



Another thing that distinguishes counselors from other mental health professionals is a developmental perspective. Counseling psychologists who are trained in the medical model tend to focus on diagnosing a mental disorder and view clients' problems as pathological. By contrast, counselors believe that many of these problems are better understood as developmental in nature and as natural and normal responses to life's challenges. Some examples are a 4-year-old crying and clinging to her parent during the first weeks of kindergarten, a teenager being defiant and rebellious toward his parents, a woman in her 40s having an affair with a younger man after 20 years in a committed marriage, and a 63-year-old feeling depressed as retirement approaches. Counselors avoid pathologizing behaviors such as these by viewing them through a developmental lens and focus on helping clients understand that life transitions can be difficult but are transitory.

Some counseling psychologists and other mental health professionals who subscribe to the medical model work primarily to assist clients whose problems are severe enough to be diagnosable. Counselors, in contrast, are committed not only to remediation (helping clients resolve existing mental health issues) but also to the prevention of mental illness to the extent possible. We as counselors often say that "counseling is for everyone," which is a way to convey our hope that people will seek counseling long before their problems become serious or chronic. Counselors encourage people to seek counseling when they first begin to experience discomfort or distress rather than to wait until the distress becomes severe. Early intervention can help prevent problems from escalating, and counselors can teach clients skills to manage their concerns and prevent future occurrences.

A final cornerstone of the counseling philosophy is empowerment. Unlike the medical model of illness, which can encourage a pattern of lifelong dependence on a professional expert, counselors aim to empower clients to problem-solve independently in the future. As Remley and Herlihy (2016) stated, counselors "encourage clients to assume responsibility for their lives and learn to live in a manner that allows them autonomy and independence as those concepts are understood in the clients' cultures" (p. 30).

In summary, counselors are guided by the wellness model, which takes a holistic view of clients in all areas of functioning in their environments. Counselors understand clients from a developmental perspective, advocate for prevention, and work to empower clients to be able to resolve problems on their own in the future.

## **Professional Organizations**

Professional organizations play an important role in the counseling profession. As previously noted, ACA is the largest organization representing professional counselors. The organization connects