

Acronyms in the Helping Professions: A Guide to the Perplex

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

A. Introduction

- Confused by the strings of letters that appear in listings of helping professionals or in their jargon?
 - A quick look at the yellow pages will seem like a trip to alphabet city
- We will review the letters' meaning today!
 - Web site: <http://encouragementplus.com/a-guide-to-acronyms-in-the-helping-professions/>
 - Professionals list acronyms for their professional license, national certification, and/or degree after their names. Some acronyms refer to for tests, therapies, or diagnoses.

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

B. Professional Licensing / Certification

- **Licenses** are issued by states to allow professionals in the specified field to practice in that jurisdiction.
 - Each state sets its own requirements for education and training for each profession it recognizes, although this is usually similar to national certification standards.
- Typically, each state's Department of Health has a division of health-related boards to oversee the licensure process.

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

B. Professional Licensing / Certification

- **Certifications** are issued by boards created by professional associations to certify that a professional has met the educational and training requirements to practice in the specified field.
 - **Note:** Some states register or certify certain professions rather than issuing licenses. In such cases, the certification or registration is from the state rather than from a professional association or other credentialing body.

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
B. Professional Licensing / Certification

- Of course there are exceptions to all of this!
 - Some helping professionals may be licensed in a related professional field and certified by a national association in their chosen profession.
 - For example a Registered Art Therapist (ATR) may be licensed as a psychologist (Licensed Psychologist), clinical social worker (LCSW), or professional counselor (LPC).
 - Eric Amsel, MSW, ATR, LCSW.

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
B. Professional Licensing / Certification

- Other professionals may have dual credentials.
 - For example, a person may be licensed as both a professional counselor (LPC) and a marriage and family therapist (LMFT).
 - A clinical social worker (LCSW) may also be certified as an employee assistance professional (CEAP).
 - This makes for extra designations on their business cards, letterheads, and phone listings.

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
C. Degrees

- Almost all of the helping professions require training beyond a bachelor's degree.
 - Most master's degrees consist of from 36 to 60 semester hours (1 - 3 years)
 - Doctorates typically require 90 to 100 semester hrs. (about 4 years)
 - NOTE: some institutions of higher learning reverse the order of the initials making thing complicated!
 - For example, *Master of Arts* may be abbreviated *A.M.* instead of the usual *M.A.*

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
C. Degrees

- As noted, some helping professions have requirements for a doctorate degree.
 - Professions such as psychiatry and clinical psychology require their **practitioners** to earn doctorates.
 - Other professions (Social Work) only require doctorates to **teach** in the profession
 - Academic Degrees
 - Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy).
 - Professional Degrees
 - M.D. (Medical Doctor), Psy.D. (Doctor of Psychology), and D.S.W. (Doctor of Social Work)

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
C. Degrees

- Others in the helping professions require Masters Degrees
 - Often 2 or 3 years after the bachelor degree
 - Helping professionals requiring master degrees (such as an MA, MS, or MSW) include professional counselors and social works

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
C. Degrees

- Still others in the helping professions have religiously-oriented degrees.
 - Some graduate training programs in the helping professions are offered by seminaries and religiously-oriented colleges and universities.
 - Degrees from these institutions may reflect the religious content of the training
 - D.Min. (Doctor of Ministry), M.Div. (Masters of Divinity) or MAR (Master of Arts in Religion).
 - Others offer the more familiar degrees as well (such as MA or MS).

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
D. Certification Boards

- **Certification Boards** are formed by professional associations in order to establish standards for education and training for members of the profession.
 - Boards create exams that ensure prospective professionals can demonstrate a knowledge of critical elements of the profession.
 - Boards usually also set standards for continuing professional education, and monitor members in compliance.

I. THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
E. Professional Associations

- **Professional Associations** are federations of practitioners of a given profession
 - Most national associations have regional and state affiliates or chapters as well.
 - Many other countries have similar associations of their own.

II. TOOLS OF THE TRADE

A. Introduction

- The acronyms used in jargon of these in the helping profession are extensive.
 - Knowledge of the acronyms reflects socialization into the world of the helping professions.
 - This is particularly true for knowledge of acronyms of the tools of the trade of the helping professions
 - Diagnoses
 - Instruments
 - Psychotherapies

II. TOOLS OF THE TRADE

B. Diagnostic Systems

- There are two major systematic classifications of diseases and conditions in use in the United States.
 - Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)
 - International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
- Both systems are regularly updated as scientific knowledge increases and opinions of professionals change about the nature of disease.

II. TOOLS OF THE TRADE

C. Instruments

- Diagnostic effectiveness depends on the use of various tests and measurements.
 - There are many hundreds of tests and measurement devices that are used widely in the helping professions
 - Many more tests and measures are developed and published each.
 - Not all are valid or reliable. To check on the validity and reliability of a test, see information from the Boros Institute.

II. TOOLS OF THE TRADE

D. Psychotherapy

- There are more than five hundred theories of counseling and psychotherapy.
 - Many of these are not referred to by acronyms, such as psychoanalysis, gestalt therapy, and client-centered therapy.
 - But many are and many of these are very well know and practiced by may in the helping professions.
 - However, other of these theories or methods are not accepted by all mental health professionals.