



# SENATE BILL 279: Amend Qualifications/Practice of Counseling

2015-2016 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b>	Senate Education/Higher Education	<b>Date:</b>	April 1, 2015
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Sen. Barefoot	<b>Prepared by:</b>	James Ritter
<b>Analysis of:</b>	First Edition		Legislative Analyst

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**SUMMARY:** *Senate Bill 279 would require counseling programs in North Carolina be regionally or nationally accredited. Currently, only degrees from regionally accredited colleges and universities are included in the criteria for issuing a license.*

**CURRENT LAW:** The Board of Licensed Professional Counselors issues a license for the practice of counseling. Colleges and universities with counseling programs must be accredited at the regional level in order for their graduates to qualify for licensure in North Carolina. Any person seeking to be a licensed professional counselor associate must meet specific criteria, including one of the following:

- Have earned a minimum of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter credit hours of graduate training as defined by the Board, including a master's degree in counseling or a related field from a regionally accredited institution of higher education if the applicant enrolled in the master's program before July 1, 2009.
- Have earned a minimum of 54 semester hours or 81 quarter credit hours of graduate training as defined by the Board, including a master's degree in counseling or a related field from a regionally accredited institution of higher education if the applicant enrolled in the master's program between June 30, 2009 and July 1, 2013.
- Have earned a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter credit hours of graduate training as defined by the Board, including a master's degree in counseling or a related field from a regionally accredited institution of higher education if the applicant enrolled in the master's program after June 30, 2013.

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Senate Bill 279 would allow college and university counseling programs to be nationally accredited, as well as regionally accredited for the purposes of meeting the educational requirements for individuals seeking to become licensed professional counselor associates.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This act becomes effective October 1, 2015.

**BACKGROUND:** Counseling programs in North Carolina are accredited regionally as part of the college or university institutional accreditation process. Regional accreditation of counseling programs in North Carolina is through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), as part of AdvancEd. An example of a national accrediting agency for counseling programs would be the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). CACREP accredits counseling programs individually within colleges and universities using national standards as part of the counseling program accreditation process.

