NCASPPB Oral History Project

1. My name is Carol Hoffman. I entered the field of addictions professionally in 1979 and retired in December 2019 (40 years).
2. I was working as a “alcoholism counselor” in the early 1980s when the Board was formed and the first certifications began. I took the first “test” to become certified in 1983 and have been continuously certified, and, subsequently licensed ever since. I became more interested in the Board when the field was challenged by another counseling professional group’s attempt to take over the management of ALL counselors not already board-certified (such as psychologists and social workers). Our group was a few “breaths away” from getting legislative approval at the time and I was one of the grass roots organizers who helped to dissuade the legislature. I became interested in “self-policing” our field well ever since.
3. What drew me to the SUD field”:
   1. First became interested seeing young people in college deteriorate from drug use; volunteered briefly at a “drop-in” space begun by and largely “staffed” by a middle-aged nurse who demonstrated how to soothe a person on a “bad LSD trip”.
   2. When I couldn’t get employment as an “Army wife”, I took classes at a community college that included volunteering on a “hotline”; I learned the value of supportive listening to people in crisis.
   3. After graduate school, I took my first SUD counseling job in a 4-week residential rehab run by the military. The social worker who developed the program used a lot of group work and transactional analysis. That was the beginning of my interest in treatment and how rehab could really make a difference in people’s lives.
   4. I came to North Carolina in 1982 to work at a community mental center in the “substance abuse” division. Subsequently I worked for 4 different “area programs” in the state doing out-patient counseling, DWI screenings, EAP outreach to women, family outreach, direct EAP services and clinical supervision. I worked in program management in 2 area programs before ending my work in 2000 in the area programs, as the dissolution of them progressed. As I developed my skills as a counselor and in case management working with the 12-step community, I came to believe that our field has a unique place in the spectrum of helping professions that cannot be replicated by other counseling groups.
   5. The last 20 years of my working career I taught courses in addiction and human services at a community college. I really enjoyed “passing it on” to the next generation of counselors. I joined the Board during this time to use my experience to support the field (and protect the public).
   6. The last reason I stayed “in the field” was that they PAID me (lol). We have developed strong educational and clinical requirements for licensure now, relying largely on higher education rather than “boots on the ground” experience to define professionalism. Though I like that we have legitimized our field to compare favorably with other counseling groups, I hope that we continue to support supervision and continuing education to fully develop the skills and professionalism of counselors. We have a unique body of knowledge of how to intervene in this disease and support recovery that we need to protect and to develop.
4. Words of advice: Take yourself seriously in your early career. Beyond your basic education that gave you a foothold into the counseling profession, look for advanced counselor training and supervision opportunities, especially those that occur over time (beyond the 5.5 CE hour seminar). Find theories and practices that reflect your core values and beliefs and develop the skills that use them. Ask for live and direct supervision - not just “case discussions” – getting feedback on your ability to perform! Become the best listener, intervener, and supporter you can be and then, in your later years, find more ways to “pass it on”!