



Certified Training Center Manual

Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines
for Institutional Certification

Version 1.6
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Section 1 | Introduction

For nearly half a century, the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) has been certifying biblical counselors to ensure doctrinal integrity and to promote excellence within the biblical counseling movement. For this legacy to continue, it is crucial that future counselors receive the highest quality training in biblical counseling available. To help meet this need, ACBC accredits institutions which are approved to offer training leading to certification. Upon examination and approval by the ACBC Board of Trustees, these institutions will become an ACBC Certified Training Center (CTC).

By partnering with ACBC you are contributing to the advancement of the biblical counseling movement. As a CTC, you will equip counselors for ACBC certification and persuade those in your region that Scripture has the solutions to the most difficult problems people face. We believe God is moving in His church, and calling us back to the sufficiency of Scripture for the counseling task. When you pursue ACBC institutional certification, you are joining a movement that was founded upon and is growing out of the superiority and sufficiency of Christ and His Word for Christian faith and practice.

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a helpful resource for you as you prayerfully consider joining the mission of ACBC as a Certified Training Center. The following pages will provide more details concerning the benefits of becoming a certified institution, walk you through the process, and provide clear expectations for institutions that become formally affiliated with ACBC. I look forward to working with and serving you.

In Christ,



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Section 2 | Benefits of Institutional Certification

There are five (5) benefits to your organization becoming an ACBC Certified Training Center:

1. Advance the cause, mission, and purposes of biblical counseling through offering quality training that satisfies requirements for ACBC certification.
2. Join an expanding network of vetted, like-minded, and qualified biblical counselors. This network exists to promote the sufficiency and superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word over man's theories and interventions for solving life's problems. ACBC is made up of individuals who want nothing less than the full restoration of the Scripture's sufficiency for the discipline of counseling, as a ministry of the local church.
3. Receive guidance, encouragement, and resources directly from ACBC staff. This will include involvement with other directors of Certified Training Centers in regional director cohorts. These smaller groups function as a think-tank for issues in counseling and discipleship and facilitate discussion among various centers on topics ranging from best practices to the theology of counseling.
4. Promote upcoming training center events on ACBC's website and social media platforms. This exposure will make your organization more accessible to those searching for training and counseling.
5. Improve quality of training and services through the theological and methodological rigors that come with becoming a Certified Training Center. ACBC serves to encourage, acknowledge, and promote the essential methods and theology of biblical counseling. ACBC institutional certification communicates that your center is complying with, contributing to, and promoting standards of excellence and ethics that adhere to an established and respected organization.

Section 3 | Institutional Certification Process

There are six (6) phases of the institutional certification process from initial contact to orientation and on-boarding. This section will provide an overview of the entire process along with a detailed explanation of each phase.

- Phases 1-4 include the preliminary assessment, application, program evaluation, and report of findings related to the institutional certification process. An organization within any one of these phases is considered a **Prospective Training Center**.
 - **Phase 1 | Pre-Application Assessment**
 - **Phase 2 | Application**
 - **Phase 3 | Evaluation**
 - **Phase 4 | Report and Committee Referral**

- Phase 5 comes as the Committee votes to recommend the Prospective Training Center for a full vote of the Board of Trustees. An organization within this phase is considered a **Candidate Training Center**.
 - **Phase 5 | Board Decision**

- Phase 6 comes at the successful completion of the institutional certification process and culminates in the organization becoming a **Certified Training Center**.
 - **Phase 6 | Orientation and Operational Requirements**

PROSPECTIVE TRAINING CENTER

Phase 1: Pre-Application Assessment

From initial contact, interested centers are considered **Prospective Training Centers**.¹ The initial phase is conducted through an interview with the Director of Membership and Certification in the early stages of inquiry. In order to receive the *Application of Training Center Certification*, the prospective center must be able to demonstrate a “two-year record of full operation” in accordance with each of pre-application requirements outlined below.²

- **ACBC Guiding Documents**

Prospective training centers “must be organized in accordance with, and subscribe to, the principles and practices contained” in the ACBC guiding documents. These documents include the following.³

- a. [*Standards of Doctrine*](#)
- b. [*Standards of Conduct*](#)
- c. [*Constitution and Bylaws*](#)
- d. [*Policies and Procedures*](#)

- **Ecclesiastical Authority**

Prospective training centers must show a “responsibility to, and working relationship with, a duly recognized ecclesiastical authority such as a church, group of churches, and/or denomination subscribing to the Christian values.”

NOTE: Centers may have multiple sponsoring institutions that provide resources (e.g., facilities, monies, staffing), but there must be only one (1) identifiable ecclesiastical entity that has direct authority and oversight of the center.

¹ **Prospective Training Centers** are *not* formally affiliated with ACBC. This means that no part of their training program is counted toward any fulfillment of ACBC certification.

² For each of these requirements, see [*Policies and Procedures*](#) under the heading “Institutional Certification Procedures: Pre-Application” and in the [*By-Laws*](#) under the heading “Article IV. Institutional Membership”

³ Institutions formally affiliated with ACBC must teach “in accordance with and not contrary to” the doctrine and standards as expressed within these particular documents. Prospects must also affirm [*statements*](#) made in conjunction with the ACBC Board of Trustees including, but not limited to, the *Statement on Mental Illness and Medicine* and the *Statement on Gender*.

- **Counseling Services**

Prospective training centers are required to demonstrate excellence in providing biblical “counseling services.”

NOTE: ACBC requires that a system of counseling services should be in place for not only intake purposes, but also for quality biblical counseling training leading to certification. Training centers in good standing are expected to provide opportunities for their students to observe and participate in counseling relationships under the guidance of certified members, directors, and instructors.

- **Quality Training**

Prospective training centers must demonstrate excellence in biblical counseling training, curriculum, and instruction. This substantive training program must be offered for at least two (2) years prior to application, ideally with at least one full cycle of a complete curriculum being offered during that period.⁴

Phase 2: Application

Upon meeting all of the Phase 1 requirements, and upon the discretion of the Director of Membership and Certification, the *Application for Training Center Certification* will be released to the prospective training center. This application serves as the basis for the evaluation and is an important part of the overall certification process.

At this point, the prospective center enters Phase 2. The subsequent steps are outline below.

- The Director of Membership and Certification will send an e-mail to the prospective training center granting them access to the *Application for*

⁴ Adherence to the [ACBC Fundamental Training Course](#) is not a pre-application requirement; however, prospective centers that do not have a curriculum that corresponds to this template typically do not advance through the application process.

Training Center Certification and asking them to complete and submit it along with all requested materials.⁵

- Once all required documentation has been received and processed, the Director of Membership and Certification will send a subsequent e-mail that provides instructions for the payment of a one-time, non-refundable application fee of \$500.00.
- The applying center will need to establish a supervisory relationship with an active ACBC Fellow or Member of the Academy who shall provide supervision to that center.⁶ Fellow supervision entails, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Ensuring biblical counseling is being conducted at the center, meeting ACBC standards and expectations for quality
 - Ensuring that training programs leading to certification are conducted at the center
 - Signing off on the annual report of the center that he is supervising

After these steps have been completed, the applying center will move into the next phase of the process.

Phase 3: Evaluation

Upon meeting all of the requirements and expectations set out in Phase 2, the Director of Membership and Certification will begin a thorough examination of the prospective training center.

⁵ A link to the on-line application will be sent to the applicant in an e-mail with detailed instructions.

⁶ See “Article IV. Institutional Membership” of the ACBC Bylaws. It is essential that prospective centers be in relationship with ACBC Fellows at the beginning of this process. The Membership and Certification department can assist where needed. By “supervision” the guiding documents of ACBC expect all certified institutions to be formally associated with a Fellow or Member of the Academy who shall ensure quality and compliance in the areas of counseling and training through maintaining an ongoing relationship with that center, providing guidance and instruction when requested, and assisting the center during times of annual reporting, systematic reviews, or occasional audits.

Due to the nature of this phase, ACBC will refrain from providing an estimated timeframe for the completion of the evaluation. At any point, ACBC reserves the right to request revisions for sub-standard materials or supplemental items.⁷

This examination will include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Review the application and document any questions, concerns, and observations for further follow-up.
- Evaluate course lectures (e.g., instructor notes, student handouts, visual presentations, etc.), listen to audio of course instruction, and review any other course information that is pertinent.⁸
- Evaluate counseling practices
- Conduct interviews for the purpose of gathering data from center leaders, authority holders, instructors, counselors, students, and Board Members and Fellows.
- Visit the center, if deemed necessary by the Training Center Certification Committee (TCCC) or the Board of Trustees.⁹

After the entire evaluation process has been completed, the applying center will move into the next phase of the process.

Phase 4: Report and Committee Referral

Upon the completion of the curriculum evaluation, interviews, and necessary follow-up related to data gathering, the Director of Membership and Certification will prepare a comprehensive report of the findings from the Phase 3 evaluation process.

⁷ Applications submitted after June 1 may not be processed in time of the annual meeting each October.

⁸ Supplemental materials are requested and may be submitted within the application.

⁹ If deemed necessary, the Director of Membership and Certification and/or other appointed person(s) will visit the applying center for evaluation. All expenses, including transportation, meals and housing for the review team and an appropriate fee for the team's time will be the sole responsibility of the applying center.

ACBC will refrain from guaranteeing a timeline for when a prospective training center will reach this point of the process.

- A comprehensive report of the prospective center will be compiled and presented to the TCCC for evaluation.¹⁰ This committee is comprised of members of the ACBC Board of Trustees.
- The TCCC will then respond in one (1) of the following ways:
 1. Recommend the center to the full Board of Trustees who will then vote on the applying center at one of their Quarterly Meetings or the Annual Meeting in October.¹¹
 2. Ask the Director of Membership and Certification to gather more information and perform a follow-up presentation to the TCCC at a later date.
 3. Deny the application of the prospective center.

The prospective center will receive an official decision (in the form of an e-mail and/or official letter) communicating the decision of the TCCC by the Director of Membership and Certification.

After prospective centers have been recommended by the TCCC to move to a final vote by the Board of Trustees, that center will move to the next phase of the process.

¹⁰ Depending upon current demand and workload, Training Center Certification Committee meetings are called to review reports for at least 3-4 prospective centers at a time. These meetings will be scheduled as these numbers of reports are completed.

¹¹ Certification is granted upon a 2/3 majority vote by the ACBC Board of Trustees. The annual Board of Trustee meeting takes place prior to the ACBC Annual Conference each October.

CANDIDATE TRAINING CENTER

Phase 5: Board Decision

Centers that move into this phase will be considered **Candidate Training Centers**.¹² It is during this phase of the process that the Director of Membership and Certification will compile a comprehensive report for the Board that will contain the training center's basic information, critical observations from the Director of Membership and Certification, and an abridged transcript of the Training Center Certification Committee meeting in which the decision was made to recommend the center.

Prior to the ACBC Annual Conference, or in some instances the quarterly meetings, the Board of Trustees will meet to vote upon the recommendation of the TCCC, a sub-committee comprised of Board members. During this portion of the meeting, the Board will have an opportunity to ask further questions of TCCC members, the Director of Membership and Certification, and/or the Executive Director.

- The Board of Trustees will respond in one of the following ways.
 1. Approve and affirm the recommendation of the TCCC.¹³
 2. Ask the Director of Membership and Certification to gather more information and perform a follow-up presentation to the Board at a later date.
 3. Vote to reject the recommendation of the TCCC and deny certified status to the candidate center.

The candidate will receive an official decision (in the form of an e-mail and/or official letter) communicating the decision of the Board by the Director of Membership and Certification. After candidates have been approved by the Board, that center will move to the next phase of the process.

¹² **Candidate Training Centers** are *not* formally affiliated with ACBC. This means that no part of their training program is counted toward any fulfillment of ACBC certification.

¹³ Certification is granted upon a 2/3 majority vote by the ACBC Board of Trustees.

CERTIFIED TRAINING CENTER

Phase 6: Orientation and Operational Requirements

Upon approval by the Board of Trustees, the candidate center is immediately granted certified status and now enjoys the rights and privileges of being an ACBC Certified Training Center including, but not limited to, the benefits outlined in [Section 2](#) of this manual.

After approval by the Board of Trustees, the Director of Membership and Certification will schedule a meeting with the director of the newly approved CTC for the purposes of onboarding and orientation. The following elements will be addressed:

- The newly approved center, along with the overseeing Fellow, will participate in a meeting with the Director of Membership and Certification for a time not exceeding six months within their first year of becoming certified.¹⁴
- The center may update their profile information, be provided relevant log-in credentials to the ACBC website, and be reminded of important dates (e.g., renewals, special events, new initiatives, etc.)
- The newly approved center will be oriented to ongoing certification matters as seen in the remainder of this manual.

¹⁴ The purpose of this meeting is to provide a health check and to determine that all requirements and expectations are being met.

Section 4 | Maintaining Certified Status

In addition to the keeping the pre-application requirements outlined in this manual (see [Section 3](#)), Certified Training Centers considered in good standing with ACBC, must *at all times* meet and fulfill the responsibilities outlined below.

Failure to adhere to any of these requirements will result in an audit of the training center in question and may necessitate revoking the center's certified status.

The following two (2) elements are crucial in maintaining compliance and good standing as a certified institution of ACBC.

- **Specific Training Requirements**
- **Annual Renewal Process**

Specific Training Requirements:

The quality and standards of the training at an ACBC Certified Training Center must correspond to the following:

- Training programs must be “designed to meet at least the requirements for individual membership” in ACBC. These are outlined, in part, in the Fundamentals Training Course (see [Appendix 1](#)).
- The *entirety* of the core fundamentals content (i.e., the Fundamentals Training Course) must be taught by an ACBC certified counselor.¹⁵
- At least 50% of the total training content must be taught by men who meet the instructor qualifications set herein.¹⁶

¹⁵ This requirement was approved and passed by the Board of Trustees during their 2019 annual meeting in Memphis, Tennessee. This requirement came into effect from January 1, 2023, and will remain effective moving forward.

¹⁶ ACBC is a complementarian organization which affirms that only men may hold the office of pastor/elder and that only men should preach in the church. While we believe that men should be the primary teachers in formal counseling training, there are allowable differences among our training centers

- At least 50% of the content must include coursework that is original in design, organization, and delivery. It is expected that any borrowed work or intellectual property is appropriately referenced and cited.

Annual Renewal Process:

In addition to maintaining standards in the quality and frequency of training, Certified Training Centers are required to renew their institutional certification on an annual basis. The following elements make up this renewal process.

Annual Report

Individual directors of Certified Training Centers, in conjunction with the supervising Fellow, are responsible to complete the *Training Center Annual Report* by a fixed date each calendar year.¹⁷

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive update to the ACBC Board of Trustees concerning the condition, progress, performance, and overall health of each Certified Training Center during each calendar year. This report will also aid in assessing the center's compliance to all requirements and standards outlined in this manual and provide ACBC the means by which to report statistical information. This report will also help ACBC to glean best practices from centers that are excelling and to further equip and engage centers that need assistance. Each question must be answered comprehensively and with attention to detail.

Fellow Review

Once the Annual Report has been submitted, the supervising Fellow of the center will be notified and sent a link of the completed report. They are required to review the report and complete a brief assessment of the center based upon ongoing accreditation standards seen in [Section 4](#) and [Section 5](#) of this manual.

Membership Covenant Affirmation

and their ecclesiastical authorities regarding women giving testimonies and teaching during fundamentals training (Statement from the Board of Trustees from their October 2023 meeting).

¹⁷ The entire renewal process, including the annual report, payment of dues, and supervising Fellow review will be conducted and assessed digitally within the Training Center Director Dashboard.

Directors are required to reaffirm, the *ACBC Institutional Membership Covenant* (see [Appendix 5](#)) annually. If the director disagrees with any portion of the covenant, he or she is to contact the Director of Membership and Certification as soon as the disagreement becomes known. This covenant must also be reviewed and signed by the supervising Fellow responsible associated with that particular center.

Renewal Dues

Certified Training Centers shall pay renewal dues each year. The amount of these dues is based on the number of students who have enrolled in a Fundamentals Training Course at that center during the preceding calendar year. Training centers are required to track enrollment of all students who participate in training offered at that center as it relates to the ACBC certification process.¹⁸ The three tiers of annual dues are as follows:

Tier 1:	0-25 students enrolled	\$150.00
Tier 2:	26-125 students enrolled	\$300.00
Tier 3:	126+ students enrolled	\$750.00

¹⁸ At any time, ACBC staff may contact any Certified Training Center in order to request verification of training for individuals working through the certification process.

Section 5 | General Accrediting Matters

The mission and purpose of ACBC includes not only setting standards for excellence in biblical counseling training but also necessitates occasional accrediting reviews of affiliated institutions to ensure continued excellence and quality in counseling services and training. As an accrediting and certifying agency, ACBC takes quality seriously and this is reflected in routine reviews focused on the quality of content and conduct.

Reviews and Audits:

Institutional Review

In order to ensure that standards outlined in this manual and further defined in the [ACBC Guiding Documents](#) are kept in compliance, each Certified Training Center will need to submit to a comprehensive review in an increment to be determined by the Executive Director from the time that the center became certified.

The certification review may involve the following:

- Review of the center's *Annual Reports* from the past five (5) years or since the time of the last review.
- Submission of the entirety of Fundamentals Training Course (e.g., Phase 1) training curriculum (see [Appendix 1](#)).
- Submission of a selection of lectures in an audio and/or video format for review. This selection will be at the discretion of the Director Membership and Certification and/or the TCCC.
- Interviews with the center director, member(s) of the ecclesiastical authority over the center, counselors, trainees, and supervising Fellows.

All findings will be summarized and reported to the TCCC for recommendation and/or affirmation of accrediting status as a certified institution of the organization.

Institutional Audit

On certain occasions, whether prompted by failure to meet standards of excellence as listed in [Section 4](#) or prompted by requests for data in addition to normal reporting procedures, the Director of Membership and Certification may find a CTC to be in violation of the standards set forth in this manual.

In these scenarios, the Director of Membership and Certification, in conjunction with the center's supervising Fellow as necessary, will begin an inquiry into the matter. At this point the center is considered under institutional audit.

The Director of Membership and Certification and the supervising Fellow may seek to collect documentation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Current schedules related to overall training programs
- Current training enrollment information and statistics
- Current list of training options offered (e.g., online, remote, etc.)
- Current state of counseling services
- Financial arrangements and health of the center

After the necessary data has been gathered for the institutional audit, the Director of Membership and Certification will summarize the findings and provide a report to the TCCC that outlines the specific violations in addition to recommendations for addressing these violations.¹⁹

- The TCCC will then respond in one of the following ways:
 1. Provide a specific plan-of-action for the center to adequately address the stated violation in order to meet compliance.

NOTE: Time periods for compliance may not exceed one (1) year. During this time, the center may maintain certified status, but be identified as being under institutional audit. If compliance is not met within the stated period of time, the center's status may be revoked.

¹⁹ The Director of Membership and Certification will partner with the supervising Fellow assigned or affiliated with the Certified Training Center under audit.

2. Ask the Director of Membership and Certification to gather more information and perform a follow-up report to the TCCC at a later date.²⁰
3. Deem the violations serious enough to consider the center as not being in good standing with ACBC. At this time, the TCCC will decide to revoke the center's certified status. This action may also be reviewed by the Board of Trustees.

²⁰ The center will still be considered under audit during this time.

Appeals and Requests:

Letter of Appeal

Four (4) groups may submit a *Letter of Appeal* to the Director of Membership and Certification in order to request various considerations regarding their unique circumstances, address previous decisions of the TCCC and/or Board of Trustees, and/or address current situations that may negatively impact their current certified standing with ACBC.

- Group 1: Prospective Training Centers²¹
 - Request for exemptions to current requirements, fees, or processes
 - Request for application to be reconsidered by the TCCC after initial denial
- Group 2: Candidate Training Centers
 - Request for application to be reconsidered by the Board after initial denial
- Group 3: Certified Training Centers
 - Ask for an adjustment in order to maintain compliance or avoid potential violations (e.g., need to change or transition ecclesiastical authority, other changes that would impact status)
- Group 4: Former Certified Training Centers
 - Ask for reconsideration of a previous TCCC/Board decision in order to be reinstated as a certified institution in good standing.²²

In each of these scenarios, the Training Center Certification Committee (TCCC) will be the first group to address the appeal and choose to either accept the appeal

²¹ These may be first-time applicants, or applicants who had previously gone through the institutional certification process but were initially denied.

²² If certified status has lapses for longer than one (1) calendar year, then the center must submit a *Request for Reinstatement* (see below).

and forward it to the full Board for discussion and vote or to reject the appeal outright. This decision will be considered final.

The appeal must be provided on official letterhead from the center and/or from the ecclesiastical authority. The letter must be detailed and may also accompany any additional documentation that would supplement the appeal.

Request for Reinstatement

In unique scenarios where a former training center's certification has lapsed for over one (1) calendar year and would seek to have their status reinstated, the director of that center must submit a formal *Request for Reapplication* to the Director of Membership and Certification.²³ While the details of this request will differ on a case-by-case basis and should begin with a meeting with the Director of Membership and Certification, the following elements should be included:

- Pay the reapplication fee of \$250.00.²⁴
- Provide a detailed timeline outlining and including the initial application process, initial certification of the center by the ACBC Board of Trustees, and reason(s) for the center losing its accredited status.
- Provide a detailed point-by-point description of all the elements of the center that has remained the same (curriculum, leadership, oversight, etc.) since initial certification.
- Provide a detailed point-by-point description of all the elements of the center that has been changed (location, curriculum, leadership, oversight, etc.) since initial certification.
- Submit a digital copy of the entire Fundamentals Training Course (see [Appendix 1](#)) to the Director of Membership and Certification.

This information should be compiled and contained within the body of a letter addressed to the Training Center Certification Committee. Be sure to explain the reasons why the center is seeking re-certification and how the center has sought to

²³ These requests may only be submitted by formerly certified centers that have had minimal to no change in ecclesiastical authority, location, or curriculum.

²⁴ This will be processed by the Director of Membership and Certification prior to the request for reapplication to be considered.

comply with all requirements as outlined in this manual. Additional information may be requested by the Director of Membership and Certification or the TCCC. Final decisions will be made by the Board of Trustees as a recommendation from the TCCC.

Section 6 | Counseling Specializations

ACBC desires that all certified members seek to further sharpen their counseling skills and grow in their knowledge of God’s Word through ongoing education. Counseling Specializations are designed to allow ACBC certified counselors the opportunity to minister to their counselees with excellence in the specific areas covered by this advanced training option. Counseling Specializations are optional and may count towards members earning Continuing Education Units.²⁵

The Board of Trustees has approved core-training topics, readings, and examinations that focus on specialized areas of counseling concern. These courses are offered *exclusively* through Certified Training Centers that design a course which meets the minimum standards set forth by the Board and has had the course curriculum pre-approved by ACBC.

In order for training to count towards earning a counseling specialization, it is expected that trainees must first complete all requirements of ACBC certification and be in good standing as certified members of ACBC. This must be done before beginning any portion of the specialization training process.



²⁵ All specializations must be reviewed and pre-approved by ACBC in order to count towards members earning continuing education units (CEUs). If not approved, ACBC will *not* formally recognize the course. This process is housed in the Training Center Dashboard of the center’s membership account.

The following two (2) phases provide an overview of the counseling specialization training process. The entire process must be completed within one (1) year.

Phase 1: Education

In this phase, it is the responsibility for the certified member to find a Certified Training Center that offers specialization training. These opportunities can be found on the ACBC website through our “[Get Training](#)” map tool.²⁶ During this phase, the certified member must at least fulfill all of the core education requirements (including the training and reading components) that our outlined in [Appendix 2](#), [Appendix 3](#), and [Appendix 4](#) of this manual.²⁷

ACBC Counseling Specializations are related to certified institutions in the following ways:

- Certified Training Centers may host an ACBC certified member who is specialized, but who is not necessarily affiliated with that particular center.
- Certified Training Centers are expected to track enrollment/registration of all trainees and are required to provide this information in their *Annual Report*.
- Certified Training Centers must provide a unique *Counseling Specialization Study Guide* to all trainees.²⁸
- The *entirety* of the Counseling Specialization core-training topics (found in the specialization templates in the appendix of this manual) must be taught by ACBC certified members.

²⁶ All training events, including specializations, must be submitted for review and approval through the “Manage Events Portal” located within the Training Center Director Dashboard on the ACBC website.

²⁷ These training requirements were approved by the Board of Trustees during the 2017 annual meeting.

²⁸ These are available on the specific specialization webpages on the ACBC website. It is the responsibility of all Certified Training Centers to understand the requirements and standards for specializations and to communicate this information clearly and concisely to their students.

- Of this core-training, at least 67% must be taught by a member who has earned a counseling specialization in the same area of instruction.²⁹
- It is the responsibility of the instructors to *minimally* comply and follow the guidelines in the *Marriage Specialization Template* (see [Appendix 2](#)), the *Reconciliation Specialization Template* (see [Appendix 3](#)), and the *Addictions Specialization Template* (see [Appendix 4](#))
- Counseling Specializations *may* count toward members earning Continuing Education Units (CEUs).³⁰

Phase 2 | Examination

Once all of the education requirements have been met satisfactorily, members will enter into the examination phase. It is important that Certified Training Centers that offer a Counseling Specialization course inform their student on how the process works and the steps involved.

Step 1 | Apply for Specialization Exam Access

Members must apply to gain access to the counseling specialization exams. While the education phase is hosted through Certified Training Centers, the examination phase is organized by the ACBC office. Members will log into their account and enter the Specialization Dashboard page, the link of which is located on the home page of the membership dashboard.

Once they have entered the Specialization Dashboard, they will select the “Apply for Specialization Exam Access” button and must complete and submit that form. The form will ask for the following information:

- The year the applicant became a certified member with ACBC

²⁹ ACBC can verify this. Anyone can also view the ACBC website (via *Find a Counselor*) which shows counseling specialization designation for members choosing to be platformed on the map.

³⁰ If the course is to also count towards members earning continuing education units (CEUs), the course must be reviewed and pre-approved by ACBC. This submission for approval may be made through the “Manage Events Portal” located within the Training Center Director Dashboard on the ACBC website.

- The name of the Certified Training Center where the applicant received their specialization training and instruction
- The titles of the lectures along with the name(s) of the instructor(s) for each lecture
- The titles of the required books the applicant has read including the total number of pages for all books

After the application has been submitted, the member will receive a notification once ACBC staff have had the chance to review and approve the application and have granted access to the exams.

Step 2 | Multiple Choice Portion

Once access has been granted, applicants will be able to re-enter the Specialization Dashboard page and select “manage application” in order to begin the *Multiple Choice* portion.

This portion of the exam contains questions from the reading and training and provides the students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the material.³¹

For the exam portion:

- Students may not access or utilize any additional resources. This includes notes, Bible, or books.
- Students must receive a score of at least 80% in order to pass the *Multiple Choice* portion of the exam.
- Students will be given a time limit of 2.5 hours in order to complete the *Multiple Choice* portion of the exam.
- Students must complete the *Multiple Choice Exam* in one sitting.³²

Step 3 | Case Studies

³¹ Students will be able to gain access to the exam by logging into the membership account on the ACBC website and accessing the “My Courses” menu item.

³² If for some reason, you do not pass the *Multiple Choice* portion of the exam, you will be given two (2) more opportunities to meet the passing requirement of at least 80 percent.

Upon successful passing of the *Multiple Choice* portion, students will be granted access to the *Case Studies* portion of the exam. This part of the specialization examination is designed to test the student's ability to employ counseling theory with an attention to method and application within various scenarios.

- Students must pay a \$50.00 fee associated with this portion of the exam. The fee goes to pay for the ACBC specialization counseling approved grader.
- Students must complete the case studies using only an unmarked Bible.
- Students must submit the counseling case studies within one week of downloading the case studies.

Section 7 | Continuing Education

Since its founding, ACBC has set the standards for excellence in biblical counseling. As the organization has grown, this calling and purpose remains at the core of what ACBC certification represents to counselors and counselees alike. As ACBC moves into a new era of ministry, it is important to keep standards high. During the 2021 annual meeting, ACBC certified members voted to approve the addition of continuing education as a requirement for membership renewal.

Below you will find the policies and procedures related to continuing education. These will mostly relate to Certified Training Centers, but there is also a section included dealing with how individual members will engage with continuing education as well.



The Need for Continuing Education

As ACBC membership grows *quantitatively*, it is essential that the organization grows *qualitatively* as well. Continuing education will ensure that ACBC members will continue to develop counseling competence, skill, and knowledge well beyond the training offered certification. In this effort, continuing education (CE) will seek to:

- **Motivate members** to pursue advanced training for the purposes of developing skills, increasing in knowledge, and pursuing excellence in biblical counseling beyond the basics.
- **Maintain high expectations** of counseling competence regarding doctrine and conduct. This will develop a more engaged, more knowledgeable, and more articulate membership.
- **Foster** the mission of ACBC and will clearly communicate the serious nature of this mission to those in and outside of the church.
- **Incentivize our Certified Training Centers** to offer or expand quality advanced counseling training options.
- **Promote attendance and engagement** of our members to the ACBC Annual Conference
- **Encourage our membership** to engage with an ever-expanding resources, training, and literature within the field of biblical counseling and Christian soul care.
- **Communicate the need** for and importance of investing in theological ministerial preparation.

Policies for Continuing Education

In order to see this requirement successfully implemented, a number of policies must be in place that communicate the purpose, nature, and standards of continuing education (CE) for current ACBC members.

1. All certified members are required to complete twenty (20) continuing education units (CEUs) within a two (2) calendar year earning window that begins on the first day of January *following* the year they became certified.
 - CEUs can only be accumulated up to the maximum number of units for the earning window period.
 - CEUs cannot be earned or accumulated by *new* members until the earning window period begins. This window will open on the first day of January *following* the year they became certified.
 - CEUs cannot be “banked” or “rolled over” from one earning window period to the next.

2. Continuing Education will be assessed and valued in a unit system with the number of units corresponding to pre-approved CE training options.
 - CEUs will be *roughly* valued on a 1:1 equivalency (e.g., 1 hour of instruction/engagement = 1 CEU).
 - CE values will be determined and assigned by considering several factors including financial investment, time requirement, and capacity for engagement. The three categories below are arranged by these factors and their CEUs reflect these factors.
 - **Category 1 | High-Capacity Engagement Opportunities**

➤ ACBC Annual Pre-Conference	5 CEUs
➤ ACBC Annual Conference	15 CEUs ³³

³³ For the Pre and Annual Conference, all plenary sessions must be attended along with the full range of breakout sessions. This also includes virtual attendance.

- ACBC Essays Contribution 10 CEUs³⁴
- Bible College/Seminary Courses 20 CEUs/course³⁵
- Teaching & Instruction 2 CEUs³⁶
- Fellow Supervision 1 CEU/10 sessions

○ **Category 2 | Medium-Capacity Engagement Opportunities**

- Counseling-Discipleship-Training 10 Units³⁷
- CTC Advanced Training Various³⁸
- CTC Counseling Specializations Various³⁹

○ **Category 3 | Low-Capacity Engagement Opportunities**

- Equip & Engage Webinars 1 CEU⁴⁰
- ACBC Blog Post 3 CEUs/post
 - Approved Reading 1 CEU/100 pages⁴¹
 - TIL Podcast 1 CEU/4 episodes
 - Counseling Observation 1 CEU/hour⁴²

3. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) can be earned in two (2) ways. Either they can be earned through the attendance of ACBC pre-approved courses

³⁴ For any written submissions, units may only be awarded based on the acceptance of the submission.

³⁵ For any course, CEUs are only awarded on the basis of the student passing the course. These courses must be taught by approved faculty at a higher-learning institution that holds the status as a Certified Training Center and be in the field of biblical counseling.

³⁶ The content that makes up this teaching course must be original. Instruction and speaking needs to be through or for ACBC or another related biblical counseling organization. 2 CEUs will be awarded per hour taught.

³⁷ This counts for advanced sessions only. Units will be valued at ten (10) units per weekend of training.

³⁸ Any advanced training course, conference, or event offered through a Certified Training Center must have its course pre-approved and valued by ACBC *before* it can count towards continuing education.

³⁹ Values will vary based upon evaluation. Regardless, the specialization course must be first pre-approved by ACBC and then must be valued and assessed towards counting for continuing education.

⁴⁰ Must register and watch the webinar live or watch and log completion of the past recorded webinars.

⁴¹ Books must be selected from the *Continuing Education Approved Reading List*.

⁴² Counseling must be observed from an ACBC certified counselor and may include the observation of counseling and post-session debriefing.

and/or events or they can be earned through the member self-reporting the completion of approved CEU activities.

- Before counting towards meeting CE requirements, courses and events must be reviewed and approved by ACBC. Once approved, ACBC will promote these options through the website.
- All self-reporting options have stipulations and can be reviewed through the CEU Portal on each user's ACBC account on the website.

Procedures for Continuing Education

This section will outline the steps and procedures for Certified Training Centers and individual certified members to appropriately engage with continuing education. This entire process, from beginning to end, takes place through special access tools housed on the ACBC website.

I. Institutional (Certified Training Center) Process

1. Submit a Continuing Education Proposal

The first step in the implementation of continuing education is having Certified Training Center (CTC) directors and/or administrators submit a proposal for a CE course or event. This can be done from the Training Center Director Dashboard on the ACBC website. Directors or administrators can simply select the Manage Events Portal from the dashboard, complete the online form, and submit the form.

Once this has been done, CTC directors and administrators will be able to view their center's submitted events from the Manage Events Portal. They will be able to view the event's unique event ID, event name, start date, website link, training mode (onsite, online scheduled, or online on-demand), program type (e.g., fundamentals, exam preparation, marriage specialization, etc.), and whether or not the event is approved to count for CEUs.

2. Evaluate Proposal Details

The second step in the process is that the Director of Membership and Certification, or another authorized ACBC staff member, will evaluate submitted course or event proposals and categorize them based upon factors including (but not limited to) curriculum, cost, instructors, time investment, etc.

3. Determine Approval or Denial of Proposal

The third step in the process is for the proposed course or event to be either approved as a valid continuing education option or to deny the proposal. If denied, an ACBC staff member will communicate to the center administrator who submitted the proposal with rationale and details. Denial or approval

will be reflected on the Manage Events Portal within the Training Center Director Dashboard on the ACBC website.

4. Assign Unit Value

The fourth step in the process is to assign a numeric CEU value to the approved course/event. Values for any one course cannot surpass the two-year maximum of 20 CEUs. The CTC director or administrator will be able to see this approval, along with the assigned valued, reflected on their Manage Events Portal within the Training Center Director Dashboard on the ACBC website.

5. Promote Approved Continuing Education Course/Event

Once all previous steps have been completed, the newly approved CE course will be posted on the website for members to easily find. These will be found on the “Get Training” event map on the ACBC website.

6. Send Validation of Completion

Once a course/event is approved and promoted on the ACBC website as counting towards continuing education, members will be able to search and attend these events, regardless of training mode. It is the responsibility of the CTC director or administrator to keep registration and attendance records for every event hosted through their center (whether these be for certification, continuing education, or any additional event).

Members who attend and complete a CEU course or event through a CTC, will supply the CTC director or administrator with their unique ACBC ID number.⁴³ In order to verify attendance of members to pre-approved CEU courses or events, CTC staff will provide ACBC with two pieces of data: the unique ACBC ID number(s) of the member(s) who completed the course or event, and the unique Event ID of the approved CEU course or event in question.⁴⁴ This data should be provided through the “Process Event Attendees” tool located in the Manage Events Portal.

⁴³ This number can be found on the member dashboard of that member’s account on the ACBC website.

⁴⁴ The Event ID can be found on the Manage Events Portal within the Training Center Director Dashboard of the website.

II. Individual Certified Member Process

There are two main avenues for members to earn CEUs. The first avenue is through the attendance and successful completion of a pre-approved course/events offered through either a Certified Training Center or through an ACBC conference or event. These opportunities will be available in-person and virtually.

The second avenue is through several self-reporting options which include opportunities to earn credit through reading from the [Continuing Education Reading List](#), observing counseling from ACBC counselors, Fellows providing Phase 3 supervision, and preparing and teaching biblical counseling lectures or sessions.

The process below outlines what members should do to find and engage in continuing education opportunities in earning the necessary units.

1. Search for approved opportunities

Certified members will be able to search and find approved continuing education courses or events through the ACBC “[Get Training](#)” map on the website. For self-reporting options, members can visit the website to learn more about what these options entail and can submit a report of completion of these options within their membership dashboard under the “CEU Portal.”

2. Engage with approved training and earn CEUs

Certified members will need to register for and engage in approved continuing education courses and events. It will be the responsibility of the individual member to successfully meet the requirements of each continuing education option offered through Certified Training Centers, ACBC, or through self-reporting.

3. Verify and Record completed CE training

Members who attend and complete a continuing education course/event through Certified Training Centers, will supply the CTC director or administrator with the member’s unique ACBC ID number.⁴⁵ Directors will then submit a CEU verification report to ACBC and the CEUs will be applied to the member’s account. Certified members can submit verification of self-reporting CEU options through their member dashboard on the ACBC website. Members will have the ability to provide documentation,

⁴⁵ This number can be found on the member dashboard by logging into the ACBC website.

complete logs, upload transcripts, and submit other verification methods that provide proof of successful completion. At this point, staff members will review submitted materials and credit CEUs to the member's account.

4. View CEU progress

Certified Members will be able to keep track of their progress at any time, including how many CEUs have been earned to date and the deadline to get the required number (20 CEUs) within the two-year earning window. Once verified by ACBC, member will be able view their completed CEUs through the "CEU Portal" within their membership dashboard on the ACBC website.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ If members do not complete the required number CEUs within the two-year period, then they will be referred to Membership Services.

Section 8 | International Training Centers

ACBC is committed to pursuing excellence in biblical counseling not only on a national level, but on an international level as well. Our global initiative is designed to see Certified Training Centers established in other in order to engage those in international contexts with biblical counseling. These centers will serve as regional hubs for biblical counseling education and training that will lead to ACBC certification.

In addition to the requirements set forth in [Section 3](#) and [Section 4](#) of this manual, prospective international centers must meet the following requirements:

- ACBC certified members in-country must be identified and their involvement in the formation and ongoing ministry of this center must be established.
- ACBC [guiding documents](#), including the following: *ACBC Standards of Doctrine, Standards of Conduct, Constitution and Bylaws, and Policies and Procedures*, must be translated in the native language and available for all trainees.
- The ACBC Exams (e.g., Theology and Methodology) may or, in some cases, must be translated in the native language.⁴⁷
- An ACBC Fellow and/or Grader, approved by ACBC, must be identified who can operate fluently in the native language and can grasp cultural nuances.
- Once these elements have been met, the applying director of the international center must contact the Director of Membership and Certification in order to set up an interview with the ACBC Global Coordinator and/or the Executive Director.

⁴⁷ All translations must be supervised by a trusted source recognized and approved by the Executive Director of ACBC.

Section 9 | Marketing & Branding

While the initial institutional certification process speaks to the high standard of excellence in both biblical counseling services and training, it is vital for centers to continue in a spirit of excellence after they become certified for as long as they are formally affiliated with ACBC.

Toward this purpose, it is helpful for Certified Training Centers to consider how marketing their services will help advance the mission of ACBC and how a proper view of branding will also help our various institutions represent ACBC and the biblical counseling movement well.

Among the various reasons a center might consider marketing, I have included three to consider:

Glory of God

Certified Training Centers are not selling a product. Instead, the mission of ACBC is to see the full restoration of the sufficiency of the Scriptures for counseling in every local church in the United States and worldwide. That is our motivation for the development of purposeful marketing strategies. We want every person to be fully persuaded that God's Word has the answers to the toughest problems people face. We want to see the Lord Jesus Christ magnified over against the wisdom, theories, and interventions of man.

Advancement of Biblical Counseling

Many pastors and lay people do not know of any alternative to out-sourcing (defer and refer model) or integrative counseling. By pursuing excellence in marketing, we can greatly reduce the amount of people who are unaware of biblical counseling in our regions and introduce them to a model that is comprehensive, established, and multi-faceted.

Access to Training

There are many people in and around our regions who are eager to learn how to teach and apply the Scriptures to real life issues. They are stay-at-home moms, pastors, plumbers, lawyers, Sunday school teachers, and high school students. By pursuing excellence in marketing, we will ensure those who know about and are eager to learn biblical counseling have an opportunity to receive training at our training centers.

Introducing the Tools

There are three (3) tools that you will want to consider when promoting the services offered at your training center. After these tools have been introduced, it will be important to demonstrate the various ways these tools can be effectively utilized.

Website

The quality of your website is crucial for effective marketing. Oftentimes, this is the first line of contact between potential trainees and your center. We must therefore strive to make a good first impression.

Social Media

Social media is one of the most effective ways to reach most amount of people for the least amount of money. Here are the three of the most influential social media platforms:

Facebook: This is a social media platform that enables user to post pictures, text, and other forms of media to a public or private “feed.” This “feed” is analogous to a local bulletin board. Only, it is not just the residence of your town who see the post, but potentially thousands of users in your region.

X (formerly Twitter): This is a text-based platform which allows users to send out short messages to those who follow their account.

Instagram: This is a photo-based platform which functions similarly to Twitter.

Branding

Branding refers to the actual logo and overall presentation of the training center. This is the image people associate with your organization. ACBC, for example is represented by the “tree logo.” Oftentimes, these logos become easily recognizable and help current and potential trainees and users make associations to your center’s mission, platforms, offerings, and resources.

Utilizing the Tools

Best Practices for your Website

An effective website excels in two things: *aesthetics* and *functionality*. You can have the best and most accurate information but lack the presentation and so miss an opportunity to serve your virtual guest.

The Homepage

- It will be helpful for you to view each person who visits your website as if they were a guest visiting your house.
- The homepage functions as the front door and it is important not to “scare people away” with a messy presentation.
- You must keep this section clutter-free by removing low-quality images and limiting the amount of text which appears. This “front door” must demonstrate a clean, simple, and easy to navigate layout.

The Navigation

- Navigation refers to how the guest will travel from one part of the website to another.
- Excellent navigation will take help the guest travel to the correct page without getting lost. This requires labeling to be clear and accurate.
- If they click on a calendar icon and are directed to the staff member page, the navigation does not demonstrate excellence.

- If the guest must search for 5 minutes to find the upcoming events page, the navigation does not demonstrate excellence.

Actions Steps for Website

- If you haven't done so already, create a website.
- Walk through your website as if you are a new, first-time guest. Try this as a person looking for counseling. Try this as a person looking for training. As you do this, identify weaknesses: is your front door (home page) inviting? Does it provide clear direction? Does it contain pixelated or poor-quality images? Is it cluttered with text?
- Ask individuals unfamiliar with your center to navigate your website and provide feedback.
- If you are unable to fix these issues on your own, hire a web designer to help or mobilize tech-savvy friends of the training center to help.

Best Practices for Social Media

Facebook

- Begin by inviting other users to “Like” your page. “Liking” a page is as simple as pressing a button. Every time a new person “Likes” your page, Facebook will alert all of this person’s friends.

X

- X (formerly Twitter) is text-based while Instagram is photo/video based. To get the most out of this platform you must build a follower base. To do this, you must begin “following” other users. Ideally, they will follow you in return.
- A great way to build traction on X is to have another user “retweet” one of your messages or mention you in a tweet

Instagram

- Instagram provides a glimpse into your training center. Post pictures of training events, staff members, conferences. This helps to build excitement.

Action Steps for Social Media

- Create a Facebook page, X account, and Instagram account.
- Build your follower base by inviting people to like your page and following other users.
- Mobilize members of your staff and church to invite their Facebook friends, Twitter followers, etc. to like your page.
- Interact with those who like your page or follow you by retweeting and mentioning them in your posts.
- Post upcoming training events, updates regarding your center, and any original blog content.
- Be sure to follow ACBC:
 - Facebook: @ACBCounselors
 - X: @acbc
 - Instagram: @biblicalcounseling

ACBC Branding

All Certified Training Centers have access to use the official ACBC logo and all badges that represent various training opportunities. These logos and badges are widely recognized by those who are familiar with ACBC and are also used in a consistent fashion throughout the various platforms, trainings, events, and initiatives of the oldest and largest biblical counseling certification organization.

There are several ways that a Certified Training Center can maximize the ACBC brand to promote and market their services and also communicate to a larger audience that the services provided are excellent and held to a high standard.

- Utilize logos and event badges for broadening and recognition purposes.

- ACBC Logo

This is the official logo of the Association of Certified Training Center. Use of this logo is authorized by ACBC for all Certified Training Centers in good standing with the organization.

- Fundamentals Training Course Badge

This is the official badge used by the Association of Certified Training Center to represent vetted, approved, and excellent training represented by the Fundamentals Training Course (e.g., Phase 1) of the certification process (see [Appendix 1](#)). This badge is highly recognizable and can be used by ACBC staff to point inquirers to where they can find/identify this training.

- Advanced Training Badge

This is the official badge used by the Association of Certified Training Center to represent training represented by education that goes beyond Phases 1-3 of the certification process. This badge is highly recognizable and can be used by ACBC staff to point inquirers to where they can find/identify this training. Typically training that is associated with this badge is *not* approved to be offered as continuing education.

- Specialization Logos

These logos are used by the Association of Certified Training Center to represent approved, vetted, and excellent curriculum represented by core training requirements for each of the counseling specializations. These badges are highly recognizable and can be used by ACBC staff to point inquirers to where they can find/identify this training.

- Continuing Education Badge

This is the official badge used by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors to represent courses or events that have been submitted by Certified Training Centers and pre-approved by ACBC to count towards members earning continuing education units.

Personal Logo and Branding

- Whether or not to rebrand your training center's logo is a difficult decision since it involves time, money, and some nostalgia. While the process can be challenging, rebranding can help to generate new interest in your training center and reach people who would otherwise not give you the time of day.
- People often associate the quality of a training center logo with the quality of training center.
- Here are questions to consider if you currently have a brand and may want to consider the effectiveness and quality of that brand:
 - Does the logo clearly communicate your training center's identity?
 - Does the logo use outdated colors or design?
 - Is the image too busy? Too much text? Is the graphic too detailed?
 - Logos which are more minimalistic may be reproduced easier than a more complex logo.
 - A simple logo looks great in both an electronic and print formats.
 - Is the easy to read?

Action Steps for Branding

- Ask those both within and outside your training center to assess your currently branding (logo, presentation on website and printed material).
- Remember, all ACBC training centers are permitted to use the ACBC logo in their advertising, including website and printed material.
 - These are provided through the most recent edition of the Digital Media Kit. This kit can be downloaded at any time from your Training Center Director Dashboard on the ACBC website.



Appendices

Appendix 1 | Fundamentals Training Course

The following training requirements may be found in the *ACBC Bylaws*:

“Satisfactory completion of a course of study at a Christian church, training center or educational agency certified by this Association. This course of study must include orientation to biblical counseling, counseling case studies, marriage and family counseling, observation of counseling, and critical reflection on various theories of counseling and models of integration.”⁴⁸

The following template was created in accordance with these requirements.⁴⁹ For those who complete the Fundamentals Training Course in 2021 and beyond, it will be the responsibility of the Certified Training Center, or approved venue for training, to provide a digital certificate of completion to the applicant or upload in the certification dashboard of the ACBC website.



⁴⁸ Article II, Section A, Point 1

⁴⁹ These topics (designated by **bold** font) must be covered in a *minimum* of thirty (30) hours. A training center may exceed the minimum requirement as they see fit. This course meets the education component of Phase 1.

I. Orientation to and Dynamics of Biblical Counseling

A. Basics of Biblical Counseling

1. The Need for Biblical Counseling

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. The calling of all Christians to counsel
 2. Human problems results from depravity and the impacts of the curse
 3. Sufficiency of Scripture provides answers to life's problems
 4. Need to guard against worldly myths that attempt to explain human problems and solutions to those problems

Passages to Consider: Colossians 1:28-2:8; 2 Peter 1:3; Hebrews 3:13; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:8; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:15; Romans 15:4-7; 14

2. The Definition and Goal of Biblical Counseling

- This topic will cover the following objectives:

1. Definition of Biblical Counseling:⁵⁰

Biblical counseling is the personal discipleship ministry of God's people to others under the oversight of God's church, dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit. Biblical counseling seeks to reorient disordered thoughts, desires, affections, behaviors, and worship toward a God-designed anthropology in an effort to restore people to a right fellowship with God and others. This is accomplished by speaking the truth in love and applying Scripture to the need of the moment by comforting the suffering and calling sinners to repentance thus working to make them mature as they abide in Jesus Christ.

2. Develop a God-oriented worldview instead of a man-centered worldview
3. Provide hope based in an eternal perspective
4. Point to Jesus Christ as the means of restoration
5. Christlikeness as the aim of human growth and change

Passages to Consider: Romans 8:28-29; Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:12-15; Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; 1

⁵⁰ This definition, which was written by Drs. Dale Johnson and Samuel Stephens, and approved by ACBC, should be used in the curriculum. Other definitions can be used, but this one must be used in its entirety.

Corinthians 3:19; Ephesians 5:18-19; John 10:10; Titus 2:12-13; Romans 15:4, 13; Romans 3:10-12, 23

3. Progressive Sanctification

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Distinction between justification and sanctification⁵¹
 2. Sanctification as God's will
 3. Sanctification as transformation
 4. Sanctification as cooperative effort (Work of God and Duty of Man)
 5. Blessings of sanctification

Passages to Consider: 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Romans 8:28-29; Colossians 1:28; Ephesians. 4:12-14; Philippians 2:12-13

4. Process of Biblical Change

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Position for change (union with Christ)
 2. Power to change (Holy Spirit, motivation)
 3. Process of change (e.g., confession and repentance, renew the mind, put off/put on, etc.)

Passages to Consider: 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Romans 8:13, 28-30; Colossians 1:28; 3:5, 16; Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:11-15; 5:18; James 1:21-27; 1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:15-17; John 14-16; Galatians 5:16, 24; Titus 2:12; Luke 9:23

5. Qualifications of a Biblical Counselor

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Characterizes spiritual maturity as a believer (e.g., full of goodness, etc.)
 2. Strives towards godliness
 3. Serves God, not man
 4. Demonstrates biblical fidelity
 5. Accurately handles Scripture

Passages to Consider: Romans 5:1; 14:13-14; John 14:16; 16:5-11; Galatians 3:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:6-16; Matthew 15:8

⁵¹ Much confusion and vexation comes when a counselee confuses these two doctrines of salvation.

6. Getting to Heart Issues

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Distinguish between behaviors and desires (e.g., idols of the heart, root and fruit)
 2. The Word of God and the Spirit of God expose the inner man
 3. God's inward assessment of people (as opposed to merely outward)
 4. Address motivations of the heart
 5. Mortification of the flesh

Passages to Consider: 1 Samuel 16:7; Galatians 5; Mark 7:21-23; Luke 6:43-45; Exodus 20:1-3; Ezekiel 14:1-8; Romans 1: 18-25; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Genesis 4:5-7; Psalm 32:3; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Ezekiel 36:26; Romans 12:1-2; Proverbs 4:23

B. Key Elements in Biblical Counseling

1. Gathering Data

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Establish the necessity for listening well
 2. Focus on fact-based questioning versus feeling-oriented questioning
 3. Introduce various ways data can be gathered
 4. Provide tools for collecting, evaluating, and processing data

Passages to Consider: Genesis 3:8; 4:1-8; 1 Samuel 1:12-14; Job 19:1-3; Psalm 1:1-3; 34:12-14; Proverbs 18:13,15,17; Matthew 6:24; Mark 7:18-23; Luke 6:46-47; 11:28; Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-21; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 4:6; 1 Timothy 5:13; James 1:19-20,25

2. Discerning Problems Biblically

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Present Scripture as lens (not filter) for interpreting data
 2. Establish a theological paradigm of evaluating problems biblically
 3. Demonstrate the connection between behavior and heart

Passages to Consider: Genesis 18:1-15; 1 Samuel 21:10-15; Psalm 34:18; 51:10,17; 119:11; Proverbs 4:23; 14:13,19; 18:2,13,15; 23:7; 27:19; 28:1; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Ezekiel 14:3-5,7; Daniel 4:28-37; Mark 7:21-23; Luke

6:43-45; 10:38-42; John 4:18; 1 Corinthians 10:6-7,13,31; 2 Corinthians 5:9; 12:9-11; Philippians 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 5:11-14; James 1:8; 3:16; 4:1-2; 3 John 9-10

3. Establishing Involvement with Counselors

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Demonstrate the superiority of Christian/biblical care from clinically informed therapy
 2. Show the need for and importance of establishing loving relationships
 3. Provide clarity on limits to confidentiality regarding church discipline and legal reporting
 4. Articulate the implications of counseling the opposite sex

Passages to Consider: Leviticus 19:32; Proverbs 12:15; 16:17,21,24; 23:3; 27:6,9; Matthew 9:35-38; 12:1-7,20; 18; Mark 3:1-5; 10:21; Luke 6:27-28; 7:13; John 8:1-11; 10:27; 11:33-35; Acts 20:31; Romans 7:14-25; 9:1-3; 12:10,15; 15:14; 1 Corinthians 2:1-3; 5; 13:7; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 2:4; 4:8; 6:11; 7:16; 11:28-29; 12:20; Galatians 4:20; 6:1; Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 1:8; 2:3; Colossians 4:6,12-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; 5:14ff; 1 Timothy 2:12; 5:1-2,12; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 3:17

4. Giving Hope

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Focus attention on the centrality of the Gospel in counseling as the basis for real hope and healing
 2. Emphasize the point that all people need hope
 3. Demonstrate the false hope of psychological coping mechanisms and techniques
 4. Show how biblical hope is ultimately eschatological and surpasses current circumstances without minimizing people's pain

Passages to Consider: 2 Chronicles 18:16-26; Job 13:15; 19:25; Psalm 42:5; 37:23; 119:49; 130:5; Proverbs 10:28; 11:7; 25:20; Isaiah 8:17; Daniel 11:32; Micah 7:7; Matthew 1:21; 19:26; Luke 6:46-49; John 1:29; 15:5; 16:33; Romans 4:19-21; 5:2-5; 6:1-23; 8:22-28,37; 12:1-2,12; 15:4; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 10:13; 2 Corinthians 3:12; 4:8-18; Ephesians 1:11; 3:20; Philippians 1:6,12-14,19-20; 2:12,17; 4:13; Colossians 1:4-5,25-27; 1

Thessalonians 1:3; 4:13; 1 Timothy 1:1,15; 4:7b,10; 2 Timothy 2:8-10; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 6:19; 7:19; James 1:2-4,25; 1 Peter 1:13; 2 Peter 1:3-8; 1 John 3:3; 4:18

5. Providing Instruction

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Establish the leadership of “The Helper” (Holy Spirit)
 2. Contrast the didactic nature of BC vs. the non-directive/authoritative methods of secular psychology
 3. Discuss the process and necessity of speaking the truth in love
 4. Provide biblical example of instruction in action (e.g., Jesus, Paul) and highlight various ways instruction was given

Passages to Consider: Psalm 19:9; 119:9-11,89,105, 128, 160; Isaiah 40:14; 46:9-10; Matthew 5:1-2; 7:6; 16:13-20; 21:19-21; 28:20; Luke 1:3-4; John 17:17; Acts 20:31; Romans 1:18-32; 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 4; Colossians 1:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:10-17; Titus 3:9-10; Hebrews 5:12-14; 12:1; 2 Peter 1:3

6. Giving Homework

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Show how homework translates discussion into action
 2. Point to the power of Scripture in homework as the real “work” of counseling
 3. Demonstrate how proper interpretation (basic Hermeneutics) leads to proper application
 4. Instruct on the importance of indicatives and imperatives in Scripture

Passages to Consider: Proverbs 13:12; Isaiah 55:10-11; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 4:12-14; James 1:22-25

II. Critical Reflection on Various Theories in Counseling

A. Secular and Integration Theories

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Distinguish between secular, integration, and biblical models of counseling

2. Understanding the foundations of secular and integration models
3. Understanding the goals of secular and integration models
4. Explain difference between descriptive data and prescriptive data
5. Purposes of General Revelation and Special Revelation
6. The Nature of Truth (e.g., All truth is God's truth?)

B. What Makes Biblical Counseling Biblical?

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Human purpose is to glorify God
 2. Scripture as Standard of Truth (Authority, Sufficiency)
 3. Scripture as providing the ultimate framework for understanding human condition, the nature of human problems, and the solution to these problems.
 4. Necessity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for the counseling task

III. Husband and Wife Relationships

A. God's Purpose for Marriage

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Marriage as God-ordained institution (e.g., covenantal and committal)
 2. Marriage as providing companionship
 3. Marriage as the anchor of the family
 4. Marriage as a display of the Gospel (Justification)
 5. Marriage as a means for holiness (Sanctification)

Passages to Consider: Hebrews 13:4; Matthew 19:6; Leviticus 18:20; Genesis 2:18-25; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:31; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Genesis 1:22, 27-28; 9:1; Malachi 2:5

B. Roles of the Husband and Wife

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Understand biblical manhood (nature and responsibilities)
 2. Outline biblical disciplines/qualities of godly husbands (e.g., lover, leader, priest)
 3. Understand of biblical womanhood (nature and responsibilities)
 4. Outline biblical disciplines/qualities of godly wives (e.g., lover, helper, industrious)

Passages to Consider: Genesis 1:27; 2: 15, 19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:1-3; 16:13; Proverbs 14:8; Ephesians 5; 1 John 3:16-18; 1 Peter 3:1-6; Proverbs 31:10-31; Titus 2:3-5

C. Communication

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Construct a “theology of the tongue” (i.e., power of words)
 2. Present characteristics of wise communication
 3. Emphasize attacking problems and not people (i.e., avoiding conflict)
 4. Develop godly communication habits

Passages to Consider: Ephesians 4:25-32; James 1

D. Biblical Sexuality

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Defining sex in terms of both gender and intercourse
 2. God’s biological order (i.e., gender differences)
 3. God’s theological order (i.e., gender roles, responsibility, and functions)
 4. Man’s sinful distortion and confusion of sexual nature
 5. God’s plan for sex (marital, monogamous, heterosexual)
 6. God’s purpose for sex (intimacy, giving, procreation)

Passages to Consider: Genesis 1-2; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:13-16; Proverbs 5:15-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Leviticus 18:22-23; Romans 1:26-27; Jude 7; Proverbs 5:15-20; Song of Solomon 7:1-12

IV. Parent and Child Relationships

A. Goal of Parenting

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Stewardship of a blessing (children)
 2. Evangelize of unregenerate and wayward souls
 3. Instruct young hearts and minds
 4. Shepherd in sanctification

Passages to Consider: 1 Corinthians 10:31; Deuteronomy 6; Ephesians 6:4; Matthew 10:28; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Luke 6:43-45; Mark 7:14-23; 1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 51:6, 10; James 1:13-15; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:1-3

B. Parental Instruction

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Distinguish between wisdom vs. foolishness
 2. Promote theocentric instruction
 3. Provide nature/characteristics of godly counsel
 4. Outline types of discipleship (exemplary, formative, and corrective)

Passages to Consider: Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 20:5; Hebrews 12:5-11; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1; 11, 21; 4:10; 19:18

C. Parental Discipline

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Distinguish between parenting towards the heart vs. behavioral change
 2. Show levels of understanding the heart (e.g., desires, thoughts, beliefs)
 3. Understand the correct posture/attitude of the parent when discipling your children

Passages to Consider: 1 Corinthians 10:31; Deuteronomy 6; Ephesians 6:4; Matthew 10:28; Proverbs 4:23; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Psalm 51: 6, 10; Romans 1:25; James 1:13-15; Mark 7: 20-23; Matthew 12:34; Proverbs 1:7; 20:5; Ephesians 6:1-3

V. Frequent Issues in Counseling

A. Guilt and Repentance

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Contrast true guilt (justification) from false guilt (feelings of guilt)
 2. Provide instruction regarding biblical confession (see Prov 28:13 and James 5:14)
 3. Articulate a biblical position regarding repentance in relation to sanctification
 4. Show how repentance is deeply trinitarian (e.g., roles of God, Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ)

Passages to Consider: Proverbs 28:13; James 5:14; John 16:8; Acts 2:37; John 7:7; Galatians 6:1; Psalm 32:5; Matthew 11:28-30; 1 John 1:9; 1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 9:14; 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16

B. Forgiveness

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Define forgiveness biblically, especially regarding its role in reconciliation
 2. Outline popular views centering on forgiveness (transactional/interpersonal vs. personal/heart transformative)
 3. Describe the consequences of a spirit of unforgiveness/pride/arrogance (e.g., root of bitterness)
 4. Demonstrate what behaviors, actions, and attitudes describe a peacemaker from Scripture

Passages to Consider: Nehemiah 9:16-17; Psalm 86:5; Romans 5:6-8; Psalm 103; 10-12; Jeremiah 50:20; Romans 5:16-21; 8:1, 33-34; 1 John 1:9; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Mark 11:25; Matthew 18; Luke 23:39-43; 1 John 4:20-21

C. Trials and Suffering

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Explain the reality of trials and suffering in this world
 2. Define trials and suffering biblically (as opposed to temptations, etc.)

3. Show how God redeems trials and suffering
4. Emphasize the importance of counseling with love, concern, and patience unto those who suffer

Passages to Consider: Genesis 1:31; 2; 3:17-19; 6:5-6; Philippians 2:5-11; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 21:1-22:5; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; 1 Samuel 12:9-12; Job 1:8; 2 Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 2:23; 4:27; Psalm 66:10

D. Fear and Worry

- This topic will cover the following objectives:

1. Outline the biblical concept of worry
2. Define sinful worry as rebellion and/or lack of trust
3. Outline the biblical concept of fear
4. Define sinful fear as worship of self

Passages to Consider: 1 Corinthians 7:32; 12:25; Matthew 10; Luke 10; 12:22; 25-26; Psalm 10; Exodus 18; Deuteronomy 5; Matthew 14; Genesis 3; Proverbs 3

E. Anger

- This topic will cover the following objectives:

1. Contrast the biblical understanding of emotion from the emotion of anger
2. Contrast righteous and unrighteous anger from Scripture by examining motives, means, and outcomes
3. Demonstrate the common manifestations of unrighteous anger
4. Point out the roots of unrighteous anger (e.g., sensuality; desires of the flesh; unforgiveness; desire for control, etc.)

Passages to Consider: Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 12:16; 14:17; 15:18; 16:32; Ecclesiastes 4:31; James 1:19, 20; Genesis 4:5-8; Kings 5:10-14; 2 Chronicles 26:16-23; Exodus 22:24; Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 3:5

F. Depression

- This topic will cover the following objectives:

1. Explain the cyclical process/downward spiral of depression (e.g., how worrisome thoughts lead to deeper despair, taking eyes off God, etc.)
2. Define depression biblically along with its redemptive purpose

3. Demonstrate a connection between sinful depression and repentance
4. Emphasize the need for compassion during a season of grief/sorrow/depression

Passages to Consider: Ephesians 1:3-2:10; 5:18-6:9; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Romans 8:28-29; 1 Peter 1:3, 13; Psalm 42-43; 131; 2 Peter 1:1-11

G. Sexual Sin

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Provide a biblical perspective of sex as God's design
 2. Demonstrate how sex has been twisted by sin
 3. Teach on "sexual immorality" from Scripture
 4. Outline the various consequences of sexual immorality (e.g., sin against our body, shame, poison from within, etc.)

Passages to Consider: Matthew 15; Mark 7; 1 Corinthians 5-6; Genesis 2-3; 9; 20; Galatians 5

VI. Medical Issues in Counseling

A. Physical Illness and Biblical Counseling

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. Biblical principles of health and illness
 2. Spectrum of disease (spiritual to organic, emphasis on response)
 3. Encouraging appropriate medical care
 4. Biblical victory in the midst of difficult prognosis
 5. Ministering to the suffering

Passages to Consider: Genesis 3:15-19; Psalm 38:3-11; 1 Corinthians 11:29-30; John 9:1-3; Philippians 1:29; James 5:11; 2 Kings 20:5; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Proverbs 17:22; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Deuteronomy 29:29; Philippians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 4:6-9

B. Psychotropic Drugs and Biblical Counseling

- This topic will cover the following objectives:
 1. The need for compassion and humility

2. Medical diagnosis vs. psychiatric diagnosis (no identifiable pathology)
3. Chemical imbalance theory (definition, history, implications within current psychiatry, etc.)
4. Psychotropic drug information (e.g., mechanisms uncertain)
5. Do antidepressants work? (i.e., What do you mean by “work”)
6. Counselors and Medications

Passages to Consider: 2 Timothy 2:24; Matthew 10:16; Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 1

VII. Case Study

A. Case Study Session

This topic should cover at least one (1) session devoted to walking through a case study, role play, or another guided case discussion in order to focus on real-life application.

There are two (2) other aspects of Phase 1, these include the following.

Counseling Observations (10 hours)

In-person counseling observation is ideal, but [video observation](#) also fulfill this requirement. The counselor being observed (in either format) must be ACBC Certified.

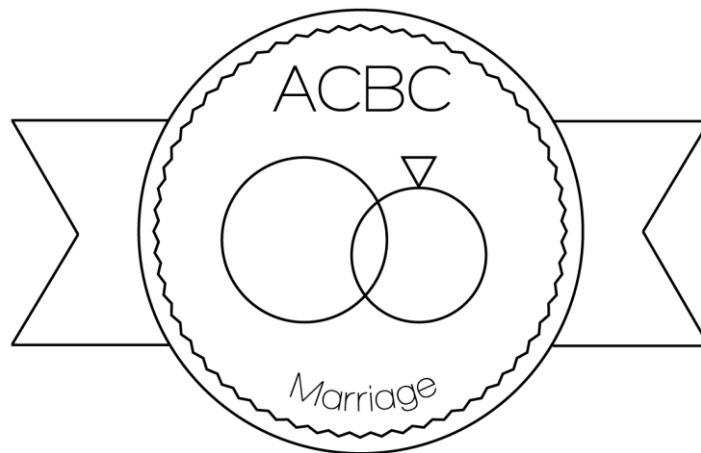
Assigned Reading

In order for assigned reading to satisfy Phase 1 requirements, the books must come from the ACBC [Approved Reading List](#).

Appendix 2 | Marriage Counseling Specialization

The following approved topics make up the core training requirement for the Marriage Counseling Specialization.⁵²

The *entirety* of the core outline below must be taught by a certified member. Of this, at least 67% must be taught by a certified member who has earned the Marriage Counseling Specialization.



⁵² These topics (designated by **bold** font) must be covered in a *minimum* of fifteen (15) hours.

I. Theological Foundations of Marriage

A. **The Nature and Purpose of Marriage**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Highlight the covenantal nature of marriage
 2. Provide an understanding of the one-flesh mystery
 3. Establish the intentions and prescriptions of “leave and cleave”
 4. Reveal biblical foundations underlying a complementarian perspective
 5. Explain the unbiblical foundations of the egalitarian perspective

B. **The Role of the Husband**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Exegete critical roles as present in passages such as Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3:7, etc.
 2. Define and explain biblical headship (i.e., stewardship of authority given by God)
 3. Show importance of husbands living with their wives in an understanding way

C. **The Role of the Wife**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Exegete critical roles as present in Titus 2 (e.g., lover of husbands and children, workers at home, etc.)

II. Orientation to Marriage Counseling

A. **Dynamics of Marriage Counseling**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Identify causes of sinful patterns which impact the marriage
 2. Define biblical concept of love versus a fleshly love
 3. Explore biblical techniques and methods when counseling couple
 4. Articulate the end goal of marriage counseling

B. **Serving Your Spouse in Marriage**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Demonstrate marriage as a tool of sanctification
 2. Show how biblical servanthood is displayed in various facets
 3. Understand the biblical principle of discipleship in marriage
 4. Identify God as the source of peace, hope, and joy instead of your spouse (e.g., faulty thinking of *5 Love Languages*)

C. Pre-Marital Counseling

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Teach the importance of personal character and integrity in a future spouse
 2. View the marital relationship within the framework of a relationship with God
 3. Identify important topics of discussion (communication, sex, roles, finances, children, etc.)
 4. Explore the facets of God-honoring courtship vs. casual dating

D. Divorce and Remarriage

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Discuss biblical passages dealing with divorce and remarriage
 2. Identify the major and differing views of divorce and remarriage
 3. Explore practical concerns regarding divorce and remarriage issues in counseling
 4. Describe the biblical covenant and commitment regarding divorce and remarriage

III. Issues in Marriage Counseling

A. Marriage and Sex

i. Enjoying Intimacy in Marriage

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Establish the “giving principle” regarding sex
 2. Explore biblical passages regarding the joys and pleasure of sex
 3. Identify a biblical pattern for sex
 4. Describe how unity and peace is reinforced in sexual intimacy

ii. **Dealing with Sexual Issues in Marriage**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Describe the dangers of weaponizing sex
 2. Discuss the impact of sexual immorality (e.g., pornography, adultery, etc.) on healthy sexual intimacy
 3. Explore the reality of medical issues and ability to participate in sex

B. Marriage and Communication

i. **Communication in Marriage**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Articulate the various motivations behind arguments (e.g., desire to win)
 2. Explore biblical techniques and practical methods promoting God-honoring listening and speaking
 3. Provide a biblical warning against speculating, assuming, and interpreting your spouse's words
 4. Describe the goal of godly communication in marriage (e.g., Gospel witness, family unity, etc.)

ii. **Conflict Resolution in Marriage**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Explore the critical nature of forgiveness, repentance, and reconciliation and the practical implications of all three within marital conflict
 2. Highlight the importance and purposes of biblical confrontation
 3. Highlight the importance and purposes of biblical confession
 4. Explore biblical techniques and practical methods contributing to a peace-filled marriage

iii. **Issues of Domestic Abuse**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Demonstrate the importance of immediate and long-term care for the abused.
 2. Provide guidelines regarding the reporting of domestic abuse.
 3. Emphasize the importance of counseling the abuser.

C. Marriage and Family

i. Parenting Pressures in Marriage

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Maintain marital unity in the parenting task
 2. Demonstrate the ways to discipline properly (e.g., not exasperating or frustrating children to anger, seeking to make peace)
 2. Explore the priority of addressing heart issues with your children.
 3. Discuss the relationships between parents and their adult children (e.g., prodigal children, married children, single adult children, etc.)
 4. Explain the purposes of discipline and training (e.g., Gospel proclamation, sanctification)

ii. Family Worship

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Describe the history and practical application of family worship
 2. Show children how to seek God
 3. Show children how to please God

iii. Ministry to Blended Families

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Explore the relationships between stepparents and children (e.g., authority, discipline, etc.)
 2. Define and describe appropriate relationships between sets of parents (e.g., how stepparents interact with biological parents, etc.)
 3. Assess how counselors work within the complexity of relationships in a way that honors biological and stepparents

iv. Family Finances

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Demonstrate connection between finances and spiritual commitments
 2. Explore the various conflicts surrounding money management in marriage
 3. Discuss the importance of cultivating a cheerful and giving spirit
 4. Describe how to honor God with resources

Assigned Reading:

To receive specialization in marriage counseling a member must complete 700 pages of reading from the following approved books.⁵³

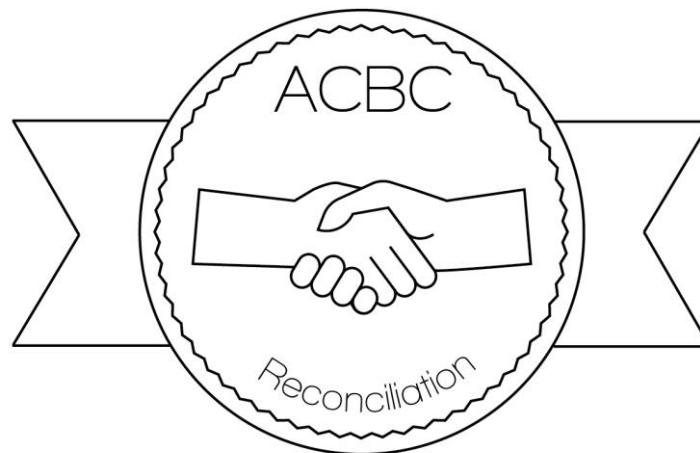
- *When Sinners Say I Do*, Dave Harvey
- *God, Marriage, and Family*, Andreas Köstenberger
- *The Exemplary Husband*, Stuart Scott
- *The Excellent Wife*, Martha Peace
- *Peacemaking for Families*, Ken Sande
- *Solving Marriage Problems*, Jay Adams
- *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*, C.J. Mahaney
- *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers*, Jim Newheiser
- *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper

⁵³ Trainees will be required to report the books they have read along with the page numbers for each.

Appendix 3 | Reconciliation Counseling Specialization

The following approved topics make up the core training requirement for the Reconciliation Counseling Specialization.⁵⁴

The *entirety* of the core outline below must be taught by a certified member. Of this, at least 67% must be taught by a certified member who has earned the Reconciliation Counseling Specialization.



⁵⁴ These topics (designated by **bold** font) must be covered in a *minimum* of fifteen (15) hours.

I. Theological Foundations of Reconciliation

A. Biblical View of Reconciliation

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Consider our responsibility from God to be ministers of reconciliation according to 2 Corinthians 5
 2. Examine the key principles of reconciliation utilizing Romans 15:14 and Colossians 1:28
 3. Describe the biblical characteristics of reconciliation in Ephesians 4:1-7 paying special attention to horizontal reconciliation (e.g., between people) in light of vertical reconciliation (e.g., between God and man)

B. Biblical View of Confession

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Apply key peacemaking principles found in Matthew 7
 2. Examine the biblical characteristics of repentance from 2 Corinthians 7:10-11
 3. Teach through the “Seven A’s of Confession” from Ken Sande’s *The Peacemaker*. These include the following:
 - a. Addressing Everyone Involved
 - b. Avoid If, But, and Maybe
 - c. Admit Specifically
 - d. Apologize
 - e. Accept the Consequences
 - f. Alter your Behavior
 - g. Ask for Forgiveness and Allow Time
 4. Describe the biblical characteristics of confession paying special attention to horizontal confession (e.g., between people) in light of vertical confession (e.g., between God and man)

C. Biblical View of Forgiveness

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Utilizing Colossians 3:5-17; 1 Peter 4:7-11; James 5:19-20 and related passages to connect the work of conflict resolution and Christian unity as it relates to redemptive history
 2. Explore promises of forgiveness according to Ephesians 4:25-32; Proverbs 18:8; 17:9

3. Describe the biblical characteristics of forgiveness paying special attention to horizontal forgiveness (e.g., between people) in light of vertical forgiveness (e.g., between God and man)
4. Studying Proverbs 19:11 and 1 Peter 4:8 describe the Need to “Lovingly Cover” sin and how that relates to loving confrontation.
5. Describe the biblical characteristics of forgiveness paying special attention to horizontal forgiveness (e.g., between people) in light of vertical forgiveness (e.g., between God and man).

D. Biblical View of Conflict

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Teach through the “The Four G’s of Conflict Resolution” from Ken Sande’s *The Peacemaker*. These include the following:
 - a. Glorify God
 - b. Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye
 - c. Go and Show Your Brother His Fault
 - d. Go and Be Reconciled
 2. Teach through the “The P.A.U.S.E. Principle” from Ken Sande’s *The Peacemaker*. These include the following:
 - a. Prepare
 - b. Affirm Relationships
 - c. Understand Interests
 - d. Search for Creative Solutions
 - e. Evaluate Options Objectively and Reasonably

II. Orientation to Reconciliation Counseling

A. Pursuing Peaceful Relationships That Undermine Conflict

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Provide Christian characteristics of peacemakers (e.g., humility, mild-hearted, quite living)
 2. Describe qualities to avoid that lead to conflict (e.g., gossip, quick-tempered, etc.)

Passages to Consider: Philippians 2:1-11; Mathew 5:2-11; Romans 12:9-17; 1 Peter 5:5-11

B. Pursuing Peace When Other Refuse to Change

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Exegete 1 Peter 4:19 to explain how one should trust God even when suffering due to obedience
 2. Exegete Romans 12:18-21 to emphasize how to seek peace and overcome evil with good

III. Issues in Reconciliation Counseling

A. Dynamics of Conflict

1. **Understanding Conflict Biblically: Causes**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Exegete James 4:1-12, Mark 7:14-23 and Matthew 12:33-37 to distinguish the circumstances of conflict from the root causes of conflict.
 - Understand how idolatry arouses and contributes to conflict (e.g., selfish ambition and vain conceit, etc.)

2. **Understanding Conflict Biblically: Categories**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Explore 1 Corinthians 10:23-32 in handling matters of conscience
 - Explore 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:13 regarding how to deal with matters of sin
 - Explore Matthew 18:15-35 regarding when and how to confront biblically

3. **Understanding Conflict Biblically: Consequences**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Show the opportunity presented by conflict
 - Explain temporary and eternal consequences
 - Provide spiritual roots of continued conflict (e.g., root of bitterness, etc.)

4. **Dynamics of Conflict with Unbelievers**

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Strive to live at peace among those in the world emphasizing the expectation to love our enemies (Romans 13; Matthew 10:16-23)

- Seek peace through confrontation and repentance.
- Involve relevant authorities when necessary (e.g., employers, government, lawsuits, etc.)
- Understand how to deal with foolish people (Proverbs 26:4; Matthew 7:6; Matthew 10:5-15)

B. Reconciliation Strategies

1. Conflict Resolution Strategies for Families

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Exegete Ephesians 6:5-9 in understanding the roles and responsibilities for parents and children
 - Exegete Matthew 15:1-9 in understanding the responsibilities of adult children to parents

2. Conflict Resolution Strategies for Churches

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Explore Matthew 18:15-35 regarding when and how to confront biblically paying special attention to the process and various stages of discipline.
 - Show the need for discipline as flock care from Acts 20:28-32
 - Describe the responsibility of submission to church authority from Hebrews 13:17

3. Conflict Resolution Strategies at Work

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Teaching through Colossians 3:22-4:1, explore the commands given to employees and employers

Assigned Reading:

To receive specialization in reconciliation counseling a member must complete 700 pages of reading from the following approved books.⁵⁵

- *Help! I'm in a Conflict*, Ernie Baker
- *Unpacking Forgiveness*, Chris Brauns
- *Redeeming Church Conflict*, Tara Barthel and David Edling
- *Pursuing Peace*, Robert Jones
- *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, John MacArthur
- *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande⁵⁶
- *Peacemaking for Families*, Ken Sande
- *The Young Peacemaker*, Corlette Sande

⁵⁵ Trainees will be required to report the books they have read along with the page numbers for each.

⁵⁶ This book contains vital information for passing the exam.

Appendix 4 | Addictions Counseling Specialization

The following approved topics make up the core training requirement for the Addictions Counseling Specialization.⁵⁷

The *entirety* of the core outline below must be taught by a certified member. Of this, at least 67% must be taught by a certified member who has earned the Addictions Counseling Specialization.



⁵⁷ These topics (designated by **bold** font) must be covered in a *minimum* of twenty (20) hours.

I. Theological Foundations of Addictions

A. Understanding Addictions Biblically

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Describe the nature of theology as “practical” – theology is by its very nature intended to change people
 2. Explain the use of the word “addiction” in these lectures – how you will use the word as a *description* not an *explanation*⁵⁸
 3. Define the nature of sin (i.e., a concise hamartiology) which details the biblical view of bondage and enslavement as opposed to the secular concept of compulsion
 4. Highlight how inordinate desires drive addiction and how these can be understood in terms of heart idolatry and spiritual adultery

B. Understanding the Disease Model of Addictions

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Outline the origin of the disease model of addictions explaining how addictions have become known as diseases and have allowed various secular models to flourish

C. A Biblical Understanding of Twelve Steps Programs

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Outline a concise history of twelve steps programs paying special attention to Alcoholics Anonymous
 2. Explain the reasons why twelve steps programs appeal to believers and Christian counselors
 3. Assess how such programs fall short of biblical goals and how it contradicts Scripture & the Gospel

D. Understanding and Evaluating Celebrate Recovery from a Biblical Perspective

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Explain how and why these Christian & integrationist programs found a willing audience

⁵⁸ Other helpful biblical concepts could include life dominating sin or habitual sin.

2. Demonstrate how Celebrate Recovery obscures biblical clarity, falls short of biblical fidelity, and confuses the Gospel
3. Critique of key tenants and use of Scripture within Celebrate Recovery (e.g., use of the Beatitudes in the formation of the twelve steps).
4. Evaluate key methodology elements within Celebrate Recovery.

II. Orientation to Addictions Counseling

A. Where to Begin with Life Dominating Sins

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Show how life-dominating sin is affected by and affects all areas of life.
 2. Explain the use of and proper understanding of accountability.
 3. Emphasize the necessity of restructuring all of life (e.g., radical amputation in Matthew 5:29-30).
 4. Emphasize the necessity of repentance and confession to God and to others.
 5. Exegete Proverbs 25:28 to explain how a lack of self-control leads to addictive behaviors.

B. How to Change Patterns of Thought and Behavior

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Exposit 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 to explain the process of taking thoughts captive unto Christ.
 2. Provide examples of deceptive thinking and contrast with biblical thinking in the following areas:
 - a. Alcoholic “Identity” vs. Christian Identity
 - b. Self-Pity vs. God’s Precious Providence
 - c. Rule of Emotions vs. Biblical View of Emotions
 - d. Bitterness/Resentment vs. Forgiveness
 - e. Discontentment vs. Contentment
 - f. Escapism vs. Find Refuge in God

C. The Role of the Church Helping Someone Who is Addicted

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Describe the use, purpose, and aim of support structures as they are depicted in Galatians 6:1-2

2. Communicate how the church serves as God's means for combating addiction through intentional discipleship and Christian community leading to spiritual growth
3. Explain how supportive, intimate, and disciple-making focused care groups can be used to facilitate spiritual maturity instead of simply encouraging sobriety.

D. The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Change Process

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 1. Present a summary of the Holy Spirit's cooperative work with the Christian in his spiritual growth.
 2. Exegete Ephesians 5:16ff in context to show the Spirit's particular work of defeating drunkenness.
 3. Exegete Galatians 5:1 to explain how to defeat the "yoke of slavery"
 4. Exegete Galatians 5:13-26 to explain the unique role of the Holy Spirit in mortifying the flesh and producing godliness

III. Issues in Addictions Counseling

A. Dynamics of Addictions

1. Medical Issues and Addictions

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Reiterate that addiction is not originally a medical problem.
 - Describe withdrawal symptoms and the options for addressing them
 - Show how the medical and biological consequences of addiction affect the counseling task
 - Describe how the counselor can work with medical personnel as part of the counseling of the addict, if necessary

2. Counseling and Substance Abuse

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Describe the physiological effects of drugs and alcohol – what do they produce?
 - Communicate how desires of the heart connect to the temptation of this particular pleasure in identifying common patterns of deceit

- Provide counseling strategies to use with a substance abuser with an emphasis on moving beyond early stages of radical amputation and moving toward ungodly desires of the heart

3. Counseling and Gambling

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Describe the effects of gambling – what is the particular pleasure derived from this activity?
 - Communicate how desires of the heart connect to the temptation of this particular pleasure in identifying common patterns of deceit
 - Provide counseling strategies that highlight appropriate and specific applications for those in bondage to gambling

4. Counseling and Sexual Sin

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Give an exegetical explanation of the enslaving power of sexual sin (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)
 - Communicate how desires of the heart connect to the temptation of this particular pleasure in identifying common patterns of deceit
 - Provide counseling strategies that highlight appropriate and specific applications for those in bondage to sexual sin

B. Addictions Intervention Strategies

1. Counseling an Addict's Enabler

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Contrast the therapeutic definition of an enabler with a biblical understanding of an enabler
 - Show how to confront and correct the enabler
 - Demonstrate ways that enablers contribute to an addict's sin

2. How to Conduct an Addiction Intervention

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Contrast the therapeutic definition of an intervention with a biblical approach to interventions
 - Focus on the purposes of an intervention

- Consider complicating factors that relate to the intervention (e.g., addict's financial ability, ongoing legal issues, location of intervention, familial situations, who to involve in the intervention etc.)

3. Prevention Strategies for Addiction

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Outline the dynamics of the home & family life that might tempt one towards addiction
 - Show how to prevent the five basic mentalities of “addictive thinking” including entitlement, consumerism, victimhood, hopelessness, and rebelliousness
 - Explain how Christians should respond and fight “relapsing” into particular sins
 - Emphasize how the grace of the Gospel and progressive sanctification relate to repentance and pursuing purity

4. Counseling Families Impacted by Addiction

- This topic should cover the following objectives:
 - Describe the destruction of roles and relationships typical in addicts' families (e.g., identifying patterns of deceit on the addict, guarding against bitterness on the part of family members)
 - Equipping family members how to respond in a God honoring way to an addict's sinful behavior
 - Provide resources to help family members strategize forms of accountability
 - Contrast the family's response to an addict who is an unbeliever with one who is a believer

Assigned Reading:

To receive specialization in addictions counseling a member must complete 1,200 pages of reading from the following approved books.⁵⁹

- *The Heart of Addiction*, by Mark Shaw
- *Relapse: Biblical Prevention Strategies*, by Mark Shaw
- *How Not to Raise and Addict*, by Mark Shaw
- *Divine Intervention: Hope and Help For Families of Addicts*, by Mark Shaw
- *Hope and Help for Gambling*, by Mark Shaw
- *Hope and Help for Video Game, TV, and Internet "Addiction,"* by Mark Shaw
- *Putting Off Life Dominating Sins*, by Susan Heck
- *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*, by Edward Welch
- *Diehard Sins*, by Rush Whitt
- *The Discipline of Grace*, by Jerry Bridges
- *Godliness Through Discipline*, by Jay Adams
- *Killing Sin Habits*, by Stuart Scott
- *Deception: Letting Go of Lying*, by Lou Priolo
- *Manipulation: Knowing How to Respond*, by Lou Priolo
- *The Enemy Within*, by Kris Lundgaard
- *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, by Jeremy Pierre
- *Free Indeed*, by Richard Ganz
- *The Doctrine of Repentance*, by Thomas Watson
- *Freedom That Lasts*, by Jim Berg

⁵⁹ Trainees will be required to report the books they have read along with the page numbers for each.

Appendix 5 | Institutional Membership Covenant

- I affirm that our training center adheres and subscribes to the ACBC Standards of Doctrine, Standards of Conduct, Constitution and Bylaws, and Policy and Procedures.
- I affirm that our training center has a “responsibility to, and working relationship with, a duly recognized ecclesiastical authority such as a church, group of churches, and/or denomination subscribing to the Christian values expressed in the ACBC Standards of Doctrine and Standards of Conduct.”
- I affirm that our training center offers biblical counseling as an ongoing ministry.
- I affirm that our center offers training programs designed to meet at least the requirements for individual membership in ACBC and these shall be continually provided.
- I affirm that as of January 1, 2023, at least 100% of the Fundamentals Training Course minimum standards are taught under the authority of our training center shall be taught by an ACBC Certified counselor. This includes any on-site, off-site, or online training.
- I affirm that all current and future counselors and trainers on staff shall agree with the purposes and principles of ACBC.
- I affirm that all counseling shall be conducted under the supervision of a Fellow or Member of the Academy of ACBC.
- I affirm that all training programs shall be conducted under the supervision of a Fellow or a Member of the Academy of ACBC.
- I affirm that a Fellow or Member of the Academy of ACBC shall provide supervision of my center and be involved in the annual reporting process.

Appendix 6 | Suggestions for Virtual Training

The ACBC *Policies and Procedures* and *By-Laws* (specifically Article II and Article IV) require that a Certified Training Center (CTC) offer approved training that leads to certification. This course of study (e.g., Fundamentals Training Course) must “include orientation to biblical counseling, counseling case studies, marriage and family counseling, observation of counseling, and critical reflection of various theories of counseling and models of integration” (Article II Membership, Section A. Member, Level 1). For a more detailed outline of these, please see the approved courses [here](#).

According to current practices, the approved courses must be taught within a *minimum* of 30 hours of lectures taught by instructors who meet certain requirements. A new certification tool was created in November 2020 to better track and verify when Phase 1 training was completed at a Certified Training Center or other approved venue. Beginning in 2022, all applicants will be required to upload a digital “certificate of completion” provided to them from the Certified Training Center that offered and hosted their Phase 1 training. This certificate will act as verification that the applicant engaged and completed a Fundamentals Training Course in an approved manner.

During the 2020 pandemic, for the first time, many Certified Training Centers began offering online or virtual training that covered either the entirety or portions of the Fundamentals Training Course. Moving into 2021 and beyond, it has become evident that these virtual training courses will continue to be offered either in tandem, or as replacements, to in-person learning.

Recognizing that this is a departure from past practices and that virtual training often presents several challenges to quality educational and learning outcomes along with personalized training experiences, this policy would provide parameters and minimum standards for Certified Training Centers and all approved venues or courses for how to structure, offer, maintain, and present virtual training that both leads to certification and provides excellent continuing education opportunities for applicants, candidates, and members alike.

The Problems

While not all of the following issues are evident in virtual training courses, this list represents ongoing issues that keep virtual training from demonstrating excellent and quality educational experiences for trainees, applicants, and members alike.

1. **Poor Video/Audio Quality** – Recordings of lectures do not demonstrate quality production/environments and lack professionalism that enhances learning outcomes and best represent excellence in training.
2. **Impersonal Learning Environments** – Platforms are static and do not include options for students to either engage with one another or with a CTC representative/instructor. Examples of these would be webpages that host links to videos.
3. **Outdated Lectures or Material** – Videos have been recorded or produced several years ago and clearly look dated. In some instances, the content that has been recorded may not have been updated to meet learning objectives as outlined in the *Certified Training Manual*.
4. **Inability to Track Student Registration or Progress**– Due to ease of access to online videos, CTCs do not have the ability to report on how many trainees, potential applicants, or members access recorded lectures or how those are being used. In the past, individuals and churches have used these recordings/materials in unauthorized ways without the knowledge of ACBC or the CTC.
5. **Lack of Verification of Course Completion** – Due to the fact that recordings are able to be accessed/downloaded without the knowledge or permission of the CTCs, the CTC staff will be unable to provide a certificate of completion to those who do complete the Fundamentals Training Course.
6. **No Clear Instruction Regarding Expectations** – Centers may not have clear instructions on how to engage with the online course, how that course fits into the ACBC certification process, and how to engage with the material in a generally appropriate way. Policies regarding individual use and group use are not available and this provides opportunity for the misuse of the materials.
7. **Absence of Testing or Accountability to Course Content** – In contexts where the virtual learning platform is static and students merely watch content passively, there is a lack of confidence in student learning outcomes

and general comprehension of materials. While it is not the CTCs responsibility to endorse individual student competency, CTCs must strive for providing opportunities for students to be tested in their knowledge and provide feedback on the content they have engaged.

The Suggested Policy

These suggestions seek to set *minimal* standards for virtual training courses. These will give CTCs the flexibility and freedom to design courses and arrange curriculum that reflects the unique strengths and character of their centers while also ensuring that certain standards are met in order that all virtual training courses across the broader ACBC organization reflect competency, clarity, professionalism, and excellence. These standards are designed to be both manageable and achievable while also giving the CTC a generous interpretation of implementation.

1. Recorded lectures should reflect high audio and video quality. The ACBC office can provide minimum quality specifications.
2. Centers may seek to purchase or utilize learning management software (LMS) or other professional course management systems to host their virtual training but are highly encouraged to consider making the investment in hosting their material using one of these systems.

Regardless of what platform is used to host the virtual training, there should be some intentional system in place that provides trainees, applicants, or members opportunities to either (1) engage with one another and/or (2) engage with course instructors or CTC representatives. Opportunities for engagement can include, but are not limited to, discussion boards, live virtual events that provide Q&A opportunities, tools for question submission, chat functions, links to e-mail course instructors for one-on-one responses, testing feedback, etc.

3. While there is no expiration date on quality instruction, it is important to be sure that the content of approved courses (e.g. Fundamentals Training Course and Specialization Courses) meet the minimum standard for learning objectives.⁶⁰ If previously recorded lectures do not cover these minimum standards, it is the responsibility of the center to ensure that the learning

⁶⁰ The learning objectives for each of these can be found in Appendix 1-4 respectively.

objectives are either (1) covered elsewhere through supplemental reading or assignments or (2) are covered in newly recorded lectures.

4. A system for tracking the progress of trainees, applicants, and members through a virtual course should be in place. The form in which this tracking is verified can vary, but for reporting purposes and for student accountability and encouragement, CTC personnel should be aware of how many students are currently enrolled in a virtual training course. Likewise, there should be some form of registration process in place that has trainees, applicants and members sign up for or enroll in a course. This data is not only required for annual reporting purposes, but the ability to track progress will also culminate in the student's completion of the course (which in the case of Fundamentals Training will necessitate that the certificate of completion be provided to the trainee, applicant, or member).
5. Clear instructions should be easily visible from the CTCs website or other marketing material (digital or print). Instructions can include, but is not limited to, information about the course content, pricing, expectations for successful completion, length, etc. If there are any particular expectations for those who are wanting to become ACBC certified, then those instructions and expectations should also be easily seen and verified in some way by the trainee, applicant, or member.

Policies regarding fair use of material, including how material should be used by individuals and/or groups should be written out and verified by users. These policies are the prerogative of the CTC; however, they must not conflict with current ACBC policies and procedures, standards, or expectations. It is the responsibility of every CTC to appropriately document all cited sources in keeping with academic integrity standards.