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# Collaborative Gatekeeping Between Site Supervisors and Mental Health Counseling Faculty

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# Collaborative Gatekeeping Between Site Supervisors and Mental Health Counseling Faculty

**Abstract**

This study examined collaborative gatekeeping practices of CACREP-accredited (2001 and 2009 standards) mental health counseling programs and fieldwork site supervisors. A total of 28 programs participated in the study exploring site supervisor collaboration with fieldwork faculty when a problematic trainee is terminated, dismissed, or fired from a fieldwork site. Results indicate that a lack of clear policies for managing problem fieldwork trainees may leave counselor educators uncertain about appropriate follow-up actions. Recommendations for future studies include replicating this study using a larger sample size, studying this topic and population using qualitative methods, and surveying the perspective of site supervisors.

**Author's Notes**

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Collaborative Gatekeeping Between Site Supervisors and Mental Health Counseling Faculty

Counselors who harm clients present a grave concern for counseling professionals and counselor educators. The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (2014) included updates to help reduce the chances of clients being harmed or endangered by counselors (Kaplan & Martz, 2014). The identification of ethical codes and training standards helps educators and supervisors identify their role in gatekeeping, which is often the first step to ensuring trainee readiness to work with clients. Counselor educators have an ethical duty to evaluate and monitor students' competencies as required by the Code of Ethics under the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014, standard F.6.B), as well as the standards under the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Counseling Related Programs (CACREP, 2009). Several codes under section F of the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) specifically address the importance of evaluating, monitoring, supervising, and addressing issues of problematic trainees. Shawn Spurgeon, of the ACA Ethics Revision Task Force, when interviewed by Kaplan and Martz (2014), highlighted the ACA Code of Ethics' (2014) increased emphasis on gatekeeping responsibility among counselor educators. Spurgeon (Kaplan & Martz, 2014) acknowledged, however, that in the past, guidelines and expectations have been limited and unclear. The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) aligned with the CACREP (2009) standards that required counselor education programs to assess the student's progress and determine appropriateness of the student to remain in the counseling program. If students are determined to be unfit for counseling practice, faculty members are required to transition them out of the program (CACREP, 2009, Section I, Standard P). The 2016 CACREP (2015) standards were released after the completion of the current study; however, the updated standards continue to align with the ACA Code of Ethics (2014). For example, the 2016 CACREP (2015) standards include language directing

counselor education programs to assess students "…in relation to retention, remediation, and dismissal" (Section 4, Standard H). Beyond the ethical and training requirements of gatekeeping, there is a concern that the consequences of not assisting problematic trainees with remediation could lead to eventual client harm.  Unaddressed problematic trainees can result in what the literature refers to as "gate slippage" (Parker et al., 2014), and problematic trainees becoming problematic counselors who harm clients.

A review of the research and conceptual literature provided estimates from counselor education faculty of the percentage of problematic trainees within counselor education programs. Some estimates included 9% to 10% of the student population as problematic (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002, 2006). Interestingly, Gaubatz and Vera (2006) found that counseling students perceived 21.5% of their peers to be problematic trainees. Literature reviews associated with counselor trainee impairment also highlighted inconsistencies in how to address such concerns among programs (McCaughan & Hill, 2015; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Vacha-Haase, Davenport, & Kerwsky, 2004; Wilkerson, 2006). Several examples of terms used within the literature included deficient, unsatisfactory, inadequate, and problem students. The differences in terminology can be confusing and contribute to a lack of consistent identification and remediation of problems within the counselor education field (Wilkerson, 2006). Inconsistency in terminology may also have legal implications when formal concerns about counselor trainee deficiencies arise. Although Wilkerson (2006) suggested two different terms to identify different aspects of problematic trainees, problematic behaviors and impairment, the use of the term impairment may raise concerns. Kress and Protivnak (2009) encouraged the use of the term problematic instead of impaired due to the potential for legal challenges associated with the term impairment.  If a counselor education program claimed that the student was impaired, then

student disability status and resulting protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 could be relevant (Crawford & Gilroy, 2012).  This could limit the gatekeeping remediation strategies available. Additionally, other researchers have preferred to label situations associated with problematic student behaviors as trainees with problems of professional competence (TPPC) (Rust, Raskin, & Hills, 2013). For the purpose of this study, trainees and students demonstrating behavioral concerns that may be associated with a lack of competence or other problematic behaviors will be referred to as *problematic trainees*.

Rust et al. (2013) defined problems of professional competence (PPC) as: "…consistent maladaptive behaviors (not associated with normal developmental training deficits) related to the trainee's physical, cognitive, mental emotional, and interpersonal functioning that interfere with the ability to adequately provide services" (p. 31). Rust et al. (2013) also identified problems of professional competence to include one or more of the following behaviors, reflecting the Lamb et al. (1987) definition: (a) demonstrating behaviors that conflict with expected professional conduct/behaviors, (b) inability to demonstrate necessary clinical skills or competencies, and (c) difficulties with psychological and emotional regulation that would negatively impact the ability to provide adequate and appropriate professional services. Some examples of behaviors that could identify a graduate counseling student as a problematic trainee include: (a) repeated ethical violations of confidentiality or maintaining appropriate boundaries even after feedback during supervision, (b) lack of clinical skills, even after additional supervision and training, resulting in ineffective counseling services, and (c) unprofessional conduct at an internship site or in the classroom (Rust et al., 2013).

For this study, the term *fieldwork* refers to the student's pre-Master's degree clinical experience during the final academic requirements of practicum and internship.  The term s*ite*

*supervisor* is used to identify the counseling department approved supervisor at the fieldwork site for the student that provides weekly supervision and completes an evaluation at the end of the supervision experience.

## Literature Review

### Remediation and Gatekeeping Programs

Several gatekeeping models have been suggested by counselor educators to help remediate problematic trainees. Wilkerson (2006) suggested a parallel to the therapeutic process of informed consent, intake and assessment, evaluation, treatment planning, and termination. Swank and Smith-Adcock (2014) argue for the use of gatekeeping strategies beginning at the admissions process. Ziomek-Daigle and Christensen (2010) interviewed counselor educators about gatekeeping practices, and recommended both pre and post admissions gatekeeping practices. Screening of grades and other admissions criteria, development of remediation plans, and follow up of remediation outcomes were suggested (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010).

Remediation programs and recommendations often include the need to fully inform the student prior to implementation. The informed consent process as described in Wilkerson (2006) and the guidelines in the 2016 CACREP (2015) standards highlight the importance of students fully understanding expectations. The academic, interpersonal, skills competency, and professional behaviors or standards deficits that may warrant remediation also need to be explained. Some counselor educators have emphasized the importance of supervision and consultation with site supervisors during the fieldwork portion of the training program to improve gatekeeping and remediation of problem student behaviors (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010).

### Fieldwork and Problematic Trainees

During fieldwork, including practicum and internship, problematic trainees may have a significant and potentially hazardous impact on clients.  Proper training of fieldwork supervisors is necessary to ensure counselors-in-training are adequately prepared to meet the needs of clients (Bjornestad, Johnson, Hittner & Paulson, 2014). During the fieldwork experience counseling trainees interact with clients on a regular basis. Most counselor education programs require a minimum of 280 direct client contact hours for both practicum and internship, based on CACREP standards (CACREP, 2015). Fieldwork is a significant opportunity for faculty and site supervisors to observe the student's ability to demonstrate counseling skills competencies. Olkin and Gaughen (1991) surveyed counselor education programs and found that practicum is a primary setting for identifying problematic trainees, highlighting the importance of fieldwork evaluation and monitoring. Given the theme of faculty and student perceptions regarding problematic trainees in the literature (Palmer, White & Chung, 2008; Ziomek-Daigle & Christiansen, 2010), more information is needed about the influence and impact of fieldwork site supervisors in the remediation process of problematic trainees. Very little research explores the interaction between fieldwork site supervisors and counselor education faculty regarding support for the remediation of problem counseling trainees. Burkholder and Burkholder (2014) studied the perceptions of faculty members of the ethical misconduct of counseling students, and suggested faculty should remain "vigilant" regarding communicating with site supervisors regarding student performance and behavior.

Other counseling and related disciplines have expressed concerns about the site supervisor role in gatekeeping. For example, Storm, Todd, Sprenkle and Morgan (2001) examined family therapy supervisors' effectiveness as gatekeepers for the profession.  They suggested that a lack of  "…recognized and accepted clinical criteria…" for evaluating

student/supervisee fitness and readiness for graduation hampers the ability to offer effective supervision (Storm et al., 2001, p. 229). Concerns regarding the ultimate responsibility for gatekeeping have been addressed in the social work literature as well (Miller & Koerin, 2001). Miller and Koerin (2001) suggested that the field instructor, referred to as the site supervisor by counselor education programs, holds the key responsibility for gatekeeping. The inclusion and assistance of internship site supervisors is essential in the collaborative care and remediation of problematic trainees and the reduction of gate slippage.

There is a need for standardized and formal procedures when a problematic trainee is terminated from a fieldwork site. These procedures are important, should a student make a legal challenge to the termination (Kerl, Garcia, McCullough & Maxwell, 2002). Authors have identified the need for more specific structure and overall clarity in sanctioned supervision with problematic practicing counselors (Foster, Leppma, & Hutchinson, 2014; Rapisarda & Britton, 2007). Dismissal procedures for problematic trainees are often unclear and unstandardized among counselor education programs (Bradey & Post, 1991). Although there have been some efforts to devise standardized procedures and to develop objective instruments to help with the dismissal process, these procedures and instruments are not used consistently (Lumadue & Duffey, 1999). Some counselor education programs report a policy of requesting a written statement about the reason for termination, and site remediation efforts. Despite a signed commitment to provide this written documentation in the event of student termination, some site supervisors decline to forward supporting written documents to the fieldwork instructor, adversely affecting remediation efforts at the student's academic program.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of faculty members at CACREP (CACREP, 2001, 2009), the current standards available during the time of the study, accredited

Mental Health Counseling and related (Community Counseling, Clinical Mental Health

Counseling) programs when collaborating with fieldwork site supervisors in the event of trainee

termination at the fieldwork site.  Site supervisors' willingness to provide written documentation

of reason for termination, and remediation efforts was an important measure of collaboration.

Several research questions informed this study: (a) How often are counselor trainees in fieldwork

fired, terminated or dismissed? (b) What actions are taken in response to the trainee being fired,

terminated or dismissed? (c) Is the documentation, if any, provided by fieldwork site supervisors

adequate to support trainee remediation? (d) What steps do counselor education programs take

when documentation is not sufficient to support remediation? and (e) what concerns, if any, do

counselor education faculty have regarding potential problematic trainees graduating from their

program?

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

The authors identified a total of 236 CACREP accredited Clinical Mental Health

Counseling, Mental Health Counseling, and Community Counseling programs through the

CACREP website. Clinical and internship coordinators were found on program websites. The

electronic-mail address of the respective point of contact (POC), either clinical or internship

coordinator, or program/department chair, was used for the electronic-mail invitation to

participate in the study. Within the electronic-mail invitation, potential participants received a

brief introduction to the study along with a link to the Survey Monkey tool. The Survey Monkey

link led potential participants directly to the study, where an informed consent document was

provided to participants for them to read and choose whether or not to participate. Upon

choosing to participate, participants were directed to the survey and instructed on completion. An

initial electronic-email invitation was sent at the beginning of the fall, 2014 semester, and a follow-up electronic-mail invitation followed approximately one month later.

**Instrumentation**

Participants were asked to complete a 19 question survey focused on collecting information about the program demographics, accreditation standards date (CACREP 2001 versus 2009), location, and frequency of experiences with fieldwork student termination or dismissal. The survey included multiple choice questions, and some write-in responses where additional information was helpful. Appendix A includes the questions, potential choices, and options for open responses. The instrument was constructed by a panel of doctorate-level clinical educators and supervisors that have experience in fieldwork as well as ample interactions with site supervisors. It was then validated by a group of four counselor educators that primarily teach and supervise fieldwork interns and correspond regularly with site supervisors. The validation process focused on gathering feedback on the proposed survey based on years of interaction with site supervisors. The survey was also reviewed by counselor education administrators that supervise fieldwork faculty. Finally, the survey was submitted to an official university Internal Review Board (IRB) for approval.  Based on evaluations from the panel and small group, the instrument met requirements for content validity as the questions were representative and clear in relation to the purpose and research questions. However, the instrument was not tested for criterion- or construct-related validity prior to implementation for this study.

<div align="center">

**Results**

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**Participants**

Two hundred and thirty six CACREP accredited programs in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Mental Health Counseling, or Community Counseling were approached for study

participation. Of the 236 programs, 153 electronic-mails were successfully delivered with invitations to participate in the study and complete the survey. Of the 153 programs contacted, a total of 28 programs (18% of programs surveyed, approximately 10% of all Mental Health related CACREP accredited programs) participated in the study. Of the 28 participating programs, ten (36%) were Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs, two (7%) were Community Counseling programs, and 14 (50%) were Mental Health Counseling programs. Two programs (7%) did not identify the specific CACREP program type. Of the 28 programs, 15 (54%) were accredited under the 2009 CACREP standards and 11 (39%) were accredited under the 2001 standards. One program (4%) did not respond to this question, and one program (4%) indicated uncertainty about the CACREP (CACREP, 2001, 2009) accreditation and standards year.

Most of the counselor education programs (n = 26) operated on a semester system and 26 (92%) had programs requiring at least 60 semester credits or 90 quarter credits. The CACREP (2015) required content areas were met, such as the eight core competency areas with related courses: (1) professional counseling orientation and ethical practice, (2) social and cultural diversity, (3) human growth and development, (4) career development, (5) counseling and helping relationships, (6) group counseling and group work, (7) assessment and testing, and (8) research and program evaluation. Additionally, several programs identified additional content area requirements outside of that required by CACREP, such as two programs which endorsed an additional ethics course, four programs that required a psychopharmacology course, and two programs requiring an introspective and personal growth course. Other programs indicated other courses such as addictions counseling, crisis and trauma counseling, family systems, couples counseling, spirituality in counseling, treatment planning, evaluation of mental health status, pre-

practicum courses, an additional group counseling course, and additional direct contact hours during fieldwork experiences were offered or required.

**Involvement of site supervisors**

Participants responded to a set of questions exploring the contractual and working process between the counselor education program and site supervisor. Twenty programs (71.4%) indicated that they offered or required a program specific orientation for site supervisors. However, only 12 (42.9%) programs agreed that they required site supervisors to sign a statement or agreement that specifically mandated written reports of student concerns. Four (14.3%) programs indicated that there were times when site supervisors refused to provide documentation when a student had been terminated from a site. Of those four (14.3%) programs, one (3.6%) indicated that the refusal of site supervisors to provide documentation occurred most of the time (75% or more), one program stated that this occurred infrequently (6-15% of the time), and two (7.1%) programs indicated that such occurrences were very rare (less than 5% of the time). In situations where site supervisors have provided documentation to support remediation, 22 programs (78.6%) explained that the site supervisor's documentation was enough to support academic remediation; however, three programs (10.7%) indicated that the documentation was not adequate to support remediation.

**Frequency of terminations**

Program representatives were asked to identify how often students were dismissed from their fieldwork sites within the past year. Sixteen programs (57.1%) reported that less than five students were dismissed, while one program (3.6%) indicated 5-10 students were fired, and eleven programs (39.3%) reported zero students were terminated. Therefore, seventeen programs

(60%) experienced the dismissal, termination, release, or firing of at least one student from a fieldwork site within the past year.

**Courses of action involved in remediation**

Respondents were asked what actions are taken once a student is dismissed from a fieldwork site. Table 1 provides an overview of different options programs could choose from and whether those actions happened often, have ever happened, or have never happened in response to a student being dismissed from a fieldwork site. Participants also had the option of specifying other courses of action taken that were not included among the choices.

Table 1

*Actions or steps taken when students/learners are dismissed, terminated, released or fired from fieldwork sites*

| Course of action | Happens often | Has happened | Never happens |
|---|---|---|---|
| | n (percentage) | n (percentage) | n (percentage) |
| Fails the course. | 3 (10.7%) | 16 (57.1%) | 7 (25%) |
| Goes through a Faculty Review Committee for Professional Readiness. | 10 (35.7%) | 11 (39.3%) | 5 (17.9%) |
| Receives remediation. | 16 (57.1 %) | 9 (32.1%) | 1 (3.6%) |
| Option to withdraw and retake the course. | 5 (17.9%) | 13 (46.4%) | 7 (25%) |
| Receives professional counseling and/or completes a psychological evaluation. | 4 (14.3%) | 18 (64.3%) | 3 (10.7%) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dismissed from the program. | 2 (7.1%) | 19 (67.9%) | 4 (14.3%) |
| Required to write letters of apology. | 8 (28.6%) | 17 (60.7%) | 4 (14.3%) |
| Required to prepare and present a presentation to a committee. | | 11 (39.3%) | 14 (50%) |
| Required to write a paper on Ethical codes and ethical behavior. | 2 (7.1%) | 13 (46.4%) | 9 (32.1%) |
| No action taken. | | 1 (3.6%) | 19 (67.9%) |

**Gatekeeping concerns**

The final questions focused on gatekeeping concerns. Programs were asked if faculty or academic staff have expressed concerns about students graduating when they are professionally, interpersonally, psychologically, or academically unprepared to serve the community. Nineteen (67.9%) respondents stated that faculty or academic staff had expressed concerns. When asked what percentage of students presented concerns, responses ranged from 0.5% up to 40%, with <1% and 5% of students having the highest frequency (n = 4, 14.3%) each. Some qualitative responses included statements about using bi-annual student reviews to proactively address concerns.  One other response indicated the gatekeeping concern applied to 25% of students who had problems or received remediation.

### Discussion

This study documented the finding that there is a growing number of counselor education programs that are requiring a specific orientation for site supervisors. In this study, 71.4% of respondents required a site supervisor orientation. Orientations provide structure,

organization and transparency of requirements or expectations for the fieldwork experience.

Requiring orientation opens an opportunity for site supervisors, students, and faculty to discuss

the fieldwork experience before issues of competency or problematic behaviors are noted, and

are an effective strategy for enhancing fieldwork faculty/site supervisor collaboration. In

addition, orientations are a form of support for site supervisors and offer increased understanding

of the vital role they play in the student's acquisition of competency. Site supervisor orientations

can be essential, just as informed consent can be important to clients. CACREP (2015) standards,

Section 3.Q supports this assertion when it is stated "Orientation, consultation, and professional

opportunities are provided by counselor education program faculty to site supervisors" (p. 15).

Implementation of site supervisor orientation is encouraged for all counselor education

programs.

Effective site supervisor orientation could increase the likelihood of supportive

documentation provided by site supervisors if problematic behaviors are noted during the

fieldwork experience. This study found that 22 respondents (78.6%) explained that the site

supervisor's documentation was enough to support academic remediation when a student was

dismissed. Although specifics about the orientation were not obtained by this study, the fact that

the majority of programs are obtaining proper documentation from site supervisors suggests

academic programs are advising supervisors of the importance of this procedure. Programs that

offer orientation have the opportunity to address the types of documentation they expect and

hope to see in situations where competency or problematic behaviors are questioned.  The site

supervisors' documentation to support academic remediation is the key to their role in effective

gatekeeping.

The implementation of a fieldwork orientation provides counseling programs with an opportunity to relay the necessary procedures and collaboration needed with site supervisors; however, having site supervisors sign a statement or agreement specifically mandating written concerns about students helps increase collaborative gatekeeping functions. Only 12 (42.9%) respondents agreed that their program required this statement from site supervisors. Therefore, the majority of programs could face problems if site supervisors refused to provide necessary documentation to aid in the remediation process. This leaves the program vulnerable to gatekeeping dilemmas if site supervisors choose not to provide documentation. Without written support for remediation, counseling program faculty may not be able to effectively remediate the terminated student, and therefore risk future gate slippage. Ziomek and Christensen (2010) interviewed counselor education faculty regarding gatekeeping procedures, and found that "some of the counselor educators noted that a written plan or contract detailing specific behaviors to be addressed or assignments that needed to be completed for the student to matriculate were required" (Ziomek & Christensen, 2010, p. 411).  However, without written documentation regarding the problematic behaviors exhibited by the trainee, counselor education faculty would not be able to identify specific behaviors for remediation plan development. Schwartz-Mette (2009) recommended that site supervisors and fieldwork faculty of psychology students "…communicate with one another as frequently as possible regarding individual student progress or any problems which may arise within particular practicum experiences" (p. 98). Clear and frequent communication between counselor education faculty and fieldwork site supervisors is essential for effective gatekeeping and the shared responsibility of trainee competence.

Site supervisors may refuse to provide written documentation without an agreement on procedures following observation of the problematic trainee. This study found that four (14.3%) programs experienced this barrier and three (10.7%) respondents did not obtain adequate documentation from site supervisors to support academic remediation. Concerns about legal ramifications may contribute to site supervisors' hesitation to document or provide adequate evidence of problem trainee behaviors. Students could take legal action against sites or supervisors if written documentation was provided to the program. Site supervisors' hesitation may also result from concerns about hindering students' academic progress. The responsibility of gatekeeping is an ethical duty (ACA, 2014) that can have life-changing consequences if a student is deemed unfit to proceed. Site supervisors may find it difficult to interfere with academic and training progress if the student demonstrates problematic behavior, out of compassion for the trainee. Finally, site supervisors may bear some responsibility for ethical violations conducted by students during fieldwork due to lack of oversight or inadequate supervision (Burkholder & Burkholder, 2014, p. 43). Therefore, their refusal to document the violation may be a form of self-protection.

A high percentage (67.9%; see Table 1) of program respondents reported "never" or "no action" taken when a fieldwork students was dismissed from the fieldwork site.  This finding seems to contradict the suggestion that students were well prepared for fieldwork. One explanation for this puzzling finding is that some students may have been dismissed for minor problems, which required little remediation and action. This supports the recommendation that clear guidelines on procedures for handling problematic trainees must be implemented consistently. This study found four (14.3%) programs that encountered site supervisors that refused to provide documentation but the frequency level of this issue occurring ranged

significantly. Among the four programs, the occurrence of a site supervisor's refusal to provide

documentation was very rare (less than 5% of the time) to most of the time (75% or more).

Frequency of refusal to provide documentation may explain the limited number of programs

requiring site supervisors to sign a written agreement for documentation in the event of

problematic behaviors. However, if procedures are in place for such cases, programs can better

ensure consistently strong gatekeeping practices.

Results of this study indicate a lack of consistent policies among respondents regarding

problematic trainees in field placement courses. More attention must be focused on developing

policies to address problematic trainees. This is especially important in relation to the

participants who noted gatekeeping concerns applied to 25% of students who had problems or

received remediation and the nineteen (67.9%) participants that stated that faculty or academic

staff had expressed concerns for 0.5% up to 40% of students. The large range of percentages

(0.5% to 40%) could be explained by differing perceptions of respondents, which was also

present in studies where counselor educators identified 9-10% of students (Gaubatz & Vera,

2002) while students identified 21% of their student peers, as demonstrating problems of

professional competency (Gaubatz & Vera, 2006). Counseling students come from varied

backgrounds with diverse life experiences and the reasons for gatekeeping concerns will also

vary.  Academic programs may want to handle problematic behaviors on a case-by-case basis

rather than adhering to blanket policies that may overlook the intricacies of complex human

interactions.  Nevertheless, it appears that consistency is needed in order to adhere to the ACA

(2014) and CACREP (2015) standards, ensuring effective oversight of problem student

behaviors. Such behaviors may lead to client harm. The implementation of written agreements

with site supervisors regarding the documented reasons for student dismissal is recommended.

**Limitations**

It is clear that despite gatekeeping standards required by the then 2001 and 2009

CACREP standards and ACA ethical codes (2014), some programs have not implemented

procedures to address problematic student behaviors in field placement courses. Despite the

importance of the topic, only a small number of responses were obtained for this study. Various

reasons for this limited response are hypothesized.  It is possible that the mode of data collection

was not effective.  Counselor educators receive regular requests in their email mailboxes for

information about counselor education programs.  The ability to reply may be limited by the

amount of time that the recipient perceives it will take to complete the request. Some participants

may not have read the electronic-mail request during the response window. Crawford and Gilory

(2013) had a 22% (112 out of 558 surveyed) response rate after sending an electronic-mail

invitation to participate in their study. They explained this limitation, stating, "…if a particular

chair or director was out of the office during the time of the survey, there was no opportunity to

collect a response" (p. 35). Concerns related to releasing proprietary information about the

respondent's department or program may also have been present (Wissel, 2014). Additionally,

despite efforts to identify the correct recipient, the email request may have been sent to the

wrong person. Finally, the low return rate could reflect an inverse correlation that reveals

counselor educators believe students are well prepared for fieldwork. In fact, 42.9% of

respondents indicated that 5% or fewer of their students were not prepared (see Table 2). It is

possible that counselor educators did not return the survey because they believe that their

program prepares students so well that the topic of the research is not a significant concern.

Another limitation was the lack of specificity for the reasons for the dismissal of the

problematic trainee related to the instrument used to collect data.  For example, the survey did

not distinguish what types of behaviors may have resulted in the trainee's removal from the

fieldwork site. Providing an opportunity for participants to further explain the reason for

dismissal would offer more insight. Additionally, the lack of developed criterion- and construct-

related validity are limitations to this first application of the instrument. Further evaluation and

revisions to the instrument given these limitations will help refine the data collection strategy.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study should be replicated with a larger sample size, allowing for statistical analysis.

Expanding the sample population pool would offer more representative data.  Although the

CACREP standards associated with gatekeeping have not changed from the 2009 to the current

standards, a follow-up study of the perspective of faculty members in 2016 CACREP standard

(2015) accredited Mental Health Counseling and related academic programs may provide

additional insight as gatekeeping efforts may have been addressed by programs.  Future studies

could employ a different recruitment method in order to increase the response rate among

potential participants.  In addition, qualitative data collection could yield valuable information.

For example, a qualitative content analysis of faculty members' lived experiences when

confronted by problematic trainees could offer robust results and ascertain common themes

among faculty members regarding their experiences with fieldwork site supervisors. Finally, a

comparison between CACREP accredited programs, and programs not accredited by CACREP

would provide additional perspectives on the occurrence of fieldwork faculty and site supervisor

collaboration concerns across the entire counselor education community.

This study suggested that the majority of programs are not requiring site supervisors to

sign an agreement that documentation will be provided if problematic behaviors are observed

during the fieldwork experience, resulting in termination. Furthermore, this study noted that a

small proportion of site supervisors are not providing documentation when termination occurs. It

is unclear why these site supervisors refuse to provide documentation to support gatekeeping

efforts in collaboration with academic programs. More research could be devoted to this

phenomenon to determine motives or fears behind offering documentation. Expanding this study

to include field site supervisors' perceptions about how CACREP accredited Mental Health

Counseling and related programs' faculty members and program administrators intervene when a

counselor trainee is fired from the fieldwork site would be advantageous and might yield helpful

information.  The results of the current study would be useful to counselor educators, students,

and field placement supervisors.

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Appendix A: Instrumentation

1. Please select the best description of your program modality.
   a. Traditional (85% or more on campus)
   b. Online
   c. Hybrid (Approximately 50% on campus and 50% online)

2. In what state or U.S. territory is your academic program?

3. What is the area of focus for your program?
   a. Clinical [Mental Health] Counseling
   b. Community Counseling
   c. Mental Health Counseling

4. Under what CACREP standards is your program accredited?
   a. 2009
   b. 2001
   c. I'm not sure

5. Is your school on a quarter or semester system?
   a. Quarter
   b. Semester

6. How many credit hours are required in your program?

7. Are your students/learners required to take any additional coursework or experiential activities outside of the standard CACREP requirements? Please select all that apply.
   - Additional Ethics courses
   - A psychopharmacology course
   - An introspective/personal growth course
   - Require personal counseling
   - Other- please specify:

8. Please identify your role in your program (select all that apply).
   - Professor/ Instructor
   - Academic Staff
   - Program Chair
   - Fieldwork or Internship Coordinator
   - Admissions Coordinator

9. Please describe your involvement with students/learners in Fieldwork (select all that apply).
- I teach fieldwork courses
- I am the fieldwork lead
- I am the fieldwork chair
- I review fieldwork applications
- I assist students/learners in finding a fieldwork site
- I am not actively involved in fieldwork or the internship process with students/learners

10. Do you offer or require a program specific orientation for Site Supervisors?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. Is the Site Supervisor required to sign a statement or agreement that specifically states they must disclose their concerns about a student/learner in writing?
    a. Yes
    b. No

12. Approximately how many students/learners have been dismissed, terminated, released or fired from a fieldwork site in the past year?
    a. None
    b. Less than 5
    c. 5 – 10
    d. 10 – 15
    e. 15 – 20
    f. 20 – 30
    g. 30 – 40
    h. More than 50

13. What actions or steps are taken when students/learners have been dismissed, terminated, released or fired from a fieldwork site? (See Table 1 for choices and results)

14. Has there been a time when a Site Supervisor refused to provide documentation when a student/learner has been terminated from the site?
    a. Yes
    b. No

15. If yes to the previous question, how often have Site Supervisors refused to provide documentation when a student/learner has been terminated from the site?
- Every time (100%)
- Happens most of the time (75%)
- Happens half of the time (50%)
- Happens every now and then (25%)
- Happens infrequently (6-15%)
- Very rare (less than 5%)

- Never happens (0%)

16. When a student/learner is dismissed, released, terminated, or fired from their Fieldwork site, was the Site Supervisor's documentation of their professional concerns adequate in supporting academic remediation?
       a. Yes
       b. No

17. Did the lack of documentation impact academic remediation plans for the student/learner that was dismissed, terminated, released or fired from the fieldwork site?
       a. Yes
       b. No

       Please Explain:
_____

18. If yes to the previous question, in what way did it impact academic remediation plans for the student/learner?
- I answered "No" to the previous question
- The academic remediation plan included LESS requirements as if the site Supervisor did provide documentation.
- The academic remediation plan included EQUAL requirements as if the site Supervisor did provide documentation.
- The academic remediation plan included MORE requirements as if the site Supervisor did provide documentation.

19. Have Faculty or Academic Staff expressed concerns about students/learners graduating that are not professionally, interpersonally, psychologically, and/or academically prepared to serve the community?
       a. Yes
       b. No

       If YES, what percentage of students/earners would this apply to? _____