

**Suffolk County Community College:
Building the Ranks of Addiction Counselors on Long Island ©**

By

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Would you or someone you know like to be involved in addressing the drug abuse epidemic on Long Island while working face-to-face with individuals and families struggling with a substance use disorder? If so then consider becoming a NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC). Do you want to learn how and where to receive this specialized training at the community college level? If so, the answer is Suffolk County Community College (SCCC), the only community college on Long Island providing this specialized training.

The mission of the Suffolk County Community College Chemical Dependency Counseling (CDC) Program is to create and provide a comprehensive program of contemporary, professional education and training in the ethical practice of addiction (substance use disorder) counseling for those seeking to enter this and related health and human service fields. Candidates interested in the CDC training program who already have a college degree can take only the CDC courses required by OASAS. Students can also earn an A.A.S degree and can transfer to a four-year college to continue their education towards a bachelor's or master's degree.

Students who complete the CDC program are well prepared to serve the greater good of our community by providing counseling service to individuals and families. CASAC counselors do life-changing work on a daily basis, sometimes amid difficult circumstances. The "fringe benefits" often come from the heart when one realizes they helped save a life.

A CASAC is a qualified health professional who works face-to-face with patients struggling with addictions. CASAC's are the backbone of the professional treatment field working in hospitals, detoxification units, crisis centers, inpatient rehabilitation centers, outpatient clinics and residential programs. CASAC's are members of a multi-disciplinary treatment team who promote overall mental health and wellness within our community.

A CASAC works individually with their patients or in group counseling sessions in all levels of care in the OASAS service delivery system. The counselor's goal is to help a patient identify the situations and behaviors that may lead to relapse and block their road to recovery. A CASAC also helps their patients to find jobs or refer them to other needed resources, services, and support groups. CASAC's also conduct educational sessions that teach not only their patients,

but also the patient's family and friends. These lessons often include coping strategies, signs and symptoms of addiction and how to avoid self-destructive behavior.

The SCCC CASAC training program provides a college level education as well as professional evidenced-based clinical training in counseling individuals with a substance use disorder diagnosis. Students are educated on the OASAS required 12 Core Functions of Counseling including intake, assessment, orientation, treatment planning and case management.

A key component of the SCCC CDC training program is our field placement class CDC255. This is where students apply theory to practice. SCCC has held long standing cooperative agreements with over 35 OASAS licensed treatment providers on Long Island. Students enrolled in the CDC255 course have the opportunity to perform intake interviews and assessments, develop treatment plans, do counseling and present intervention and education approaches. All these services are conducted within the context of the legal, ethical and professional responsibilities of the chemical dependency counselor. This course includes 270 hours of clinical work experience and 30 hours of clinical supervision.

Kathleen Ayers-Lanzillotta says "I love teaching CDC255 because it is where the rubber hits the road. Students come to class with real case histories and explore their own strengths and weakness as they are entering the workforce. Some of our students are offered paid employment while they are still completing their internship hours. I grew up with parents who both worked as CASACs here on Long Island. My mother helped to write the first Credentialed Alcoholism Counselor (CAC) exam in New York State in 1979. Following in her footsteps I became a professional in the field. After working in the chemical dependency counseling field for over 30 years I thoroughly enjoy working at SCCC. I can honestly say I am delighted to be in the position to build and develop our next generation of CASACs.

All instructors in the CDC program hold the New York State Credential in Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counseling or other relevant human services credentials that are recognized by OASAS as qualified health professionals in the field. Professor Ayers-Lanzillotta has personally selected the CDC faculty team with the impetus to provide the highest level of scientific and evidenced-based training available. She leads ongoing CDC faculty meetings and the SCCC CDC Community Advisory Board ever striving to improve and enhance the program. The CDC faculty have a wide range of experience and background in all levels of care, including prevention programs. Many of our instructors also provide guest presentations in the classrooms in disciplines other than the addiction field to promote integrated care that aims to treat the whole person.

William A. Rule states "I teach an entry level course entitled Chemical Dependency in American Society. We are offering this course on both the Grant and Eastern campuses. There is no prerequisite to take this class. It attracts students who are not in the CDC CASAC training program. We have an amazing opportunity to enlighten and empower these mostly young students regarding the medical model of the disease of addiction. Our students are learning that "addicts" are not bad people, they are sick people who need help. They learn that recovery is possible, that recovery is a process of change, they learn about local grass roots movements and that there are 25 million individuals in long term recovery in America. Last semester one student thanked me saying 'You have changed my perception of my brother. He's not a bad person – he's a sick person and needs my help.'" Mr. Rule also stated all the students who

completed the course are Narcan Overdose Rescue trained. "I believe we are having a positive social and cultural effect beyond training the next generation of counselors on Long Island."

For professional CASAC's who are already working in the treatment field who wish to remain current all CDC courses meet the NYS continuing education requirement for recertification.

If you wish to know more about the Suffolk County Community College CASAC training program feel free to contact:

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More info on the SCCC CDC Program at:

<https://sunysuffolk.edu/explore-academics/majors-and-programs/chemical-dependency-counseling/index.jsp>