Approved Training and Education Pathways for a Registration as a Behavioral Health Technician Assistant (BHT-A) and Behavioral Health Technician (BHT)

I. Overview

This policy outlines the approved training and education pathways for individuals seeking registration as:

- Behavioral Health Technician Assistant (BHT-A)

- Behavioral Health Technician (BHT)

II. Registration Education and Training Requirements

A. Behavioral Health Technician Assistant (BHT-A)

1. Completion of High School Diploma/GED; and

2. 20 hours of didactic education from a program approved or recognized by the Board

B. Behavioral Health Technician (BHT)

1. Conferred associate's degree; and

2. 40 hours of didactic education from a program approved or recognized by the Board

III. Didactic Education Requirements by Core Content

Core Content	BHT-A (min. hours)	BHT (min. hours)
Ethics	6	6
Boundaries and Dual Relationships	6	6
Documentation and Recordkeeping	4	4
Confidentiality	2	2
Cultural Competence	2	2
Human Services Coursework or Continuing Education (CE)	-	20
Total	20	40

Description of Core Content Areas:

Ethics: Ethics training in counseling should cover foundational ethical theories and terminology, professional codes of ethics, and structured decision-making models. It should address legal and clinical issues including confidentiality, informed consent, documentation, and boundary management, while also emphasizing cultural competence, personal values, and counselor self-awareness. The training must prepare professionals to apply ethical principles in real-world settings, including online practice, managed care environments, and diverse client populations.

Boundaries and Dual Relationships: Boundaries in counseling are the ethical and professional limits that protect the integrity of the client–counselor relationship and prevent harm, exploitation, or conflicts of interest. Ethics training on boundaries should address dual relationships, strategies for minimizing risk in unavoidable situations, and the application of ethical decision-making models to common dilemmas—including bartering, gift-giving, physical touch, social media, and community-based practice. Maintaining appropriate boundaries also involves recognizing signs of impairment, seeking consultation when needed, and adhering to informed consent and confidentiality standards.

Documentation and Recordkeeping: Documentation and recordkeeping in counseling involve the accurate, thorough, and ethical maintenance of client records to support clinical care, ensure legal compliance, and protect client confidentiality. Training should address what information must be documented, how to comply with standards such as HIPAA, and how to navigate ethical challenges related to different treatment contexts (e.g., families, groups, involuntary clients). Counselors must understand both their ethical responsibility and legal obligations, using records to support assessment, treatment planning, informed consent, and risk management.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality in counseling involves protecting clients' personal and health information, as required by laws such as **HIPAA** and **42 CFR Part 2.** Ethics training should cover the types of protected information, the purpose of these regulations, and how to prevent breaches, particularly in sensitive areas like substance use treatment.

Cultural Competence: Cultural competency in mental and behavioral health is the ongoing process of developing the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to effectively and ethically serve individuals from diverse backgrounds. It involves recognizing the role of implicit and explicit bias, evaluating personal and organizational perspectives on culture, and understanding how cultural factors influence communication, decision-making, and access to care. Culturally competent practitioners demonstrate inclusivity, apply ethical principles with cultural humility, and utilize frameworks to assess and mitigate bias within professional practice. Prioritizing cultural competency is essential to promoting equitable mental healthcare and reducing systemic disparities.

IV. Approved Methods for Obtaining Didactic Education

Applicants may meet education requirements through:

- Board-approved didactic education programs (see Section V)

- Coursework in a human services or related field (see Section VI)

- Continuing education courses from approved providers (per 18VAC115-80-80(C))

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Conversion Guideline:

- 1 semester credit hour = 15 clock hours

- 1 quarter hour = 10 clock hours

V. Approved Didactic Education Programs

The following programs are approved by the Board of Counseling to satisfy the didactic education requirement:

Programs	Hours Credited
Behavioral Health Academy	20 Hours
Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training	40 Hours
The below programs meet the full 40-hour requirement (no additional training needed)	
Career and Technical Education (CTE) – Mental Health Assistant or Equivalent	
Virginia Health Worker Community Health Worker Training	
Adult Continuing Education (ACE) for Mental Health Tech	
American Association of Psychiatric Techs (AAPT) Level 2 or Higher	
U.S. Air Force Mental Health Service Specialist	
U.S. Army Behavioral Health Tech 68X	
U.S. Navy Behavioral Health Tech	
Approved Human Services Programs from VA Community Colleges (see next section)	

VI. Approved Virginia Community College Programs

The following Virginia Community College programs meet the full 40-hour didactic requirement:

College	Programs
Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC)	• Human Services I, CSC • Human Service II, CSC • Substance Abuse Counseling, CSC • Human Services, AAS
Brightpoint Community College	• Bereavement and Grief Counseling, CSC • Substance Abuse Assistant, CSC • Human Services, AAS • Human Services-Pre-Social Work Specialist, AAS • Psychology, AS
Germanna Community College	• Paraprofessional Counseling, CSC • Behavioral Health Technician, Certificate
Laurel Ridge Community College	• Human Services, AAS
Northern Virginia Community College	• Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Counselor, Certificate

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Rappahannock Community College	• Psychology/Social Work Specialization, AAS
Reynolds Community College	• Behavioral Health Technician, CSC • Human Services Technician, CSC • Substance Abuse Counselor Education, CSC • Human Services, AAS
Southside Community College	• Human Services, CSC • Human Services, Certificate • Substance Abuse Counseling Assistant, Certificate • Substance Abuse Counseling Aide, CSC • Human Services, AAS
Virginia Highlands Community College (VHCC)	• Human Services Advocate, Certificate o *Discontinued Fall 2025* • Substance Abuse Counseling Assistant, CSC • Human Services, AAS o *Discontinued Fall 2025*
Virginia Peninsula College (VPCC)	• Substance Abuse Counseling Assistant, CSC • Human Services, AAS
Virginia Western Community College	• Human Services: Foundations, CSC • Human Services, AAS
Wytheville Community College (WCC)	• Human Services-Mental Health, CSC • Human Services Professional, AAS • Human Services, AS

VII. Definition of Human Services

The Board defines "human services" as an area of study that focuses on the mental health, biological, psychological, behavioral, and social aspects of human welfare with emphasis on the direct services designed to improve it.

VIII. Obtaining Board Approval as a Didactic Education Program

If you are interested in gaining Board approval as a didactic education program that would fully satisfy the didactic education training requirement, including the core content, we recommend you follow this process as outlined. Please submit to the Board, preferably 60 days in advance of a Board meeting:

- A comprehensive overview of the curriculum, including a syllabus or outline.

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- A description of the course content, detailing specific modules or topics.
- Clearly defined learning objectives for each section of the curriculum.
- The qualifications and credentials of the instructors who will deliver the training.
- A method for assessing participant learning and competency.