

DEBUNKING CACREP MYTHS: A COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS

This document, created by faculty from Cornerstone University's School of Education & Human Services, provides a professional and research-informed analysis of common misconceptions surrounding CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs). It is intended to educate students, faculty, and stakeholders about the actual role of CACREP in counselor licensure and training across the U.S.

MYTH #1: CACREP is required for licensure in all U.S. states.

FACT: Only North Carolina currently requires graduation from a CACREP-accredited program for full licensure as a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC). All other states accept regionally accredited master's programs in counseling that meet state-defined educational and clinical experience standards. CACREP allows for the National Certified Counselor (NCC) "certification." This is NOT a license and does NOT allow anyone to practice. One must obtain a state license, which ALL counseling programs (non-CACREP and CACREP) prepare students to obtain.

MYTH #2: You need to graduate from a CACREP-accredited program to get a job as a counselor.

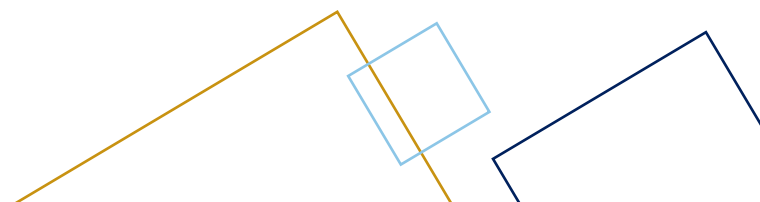
FACT: This is a widespread misconception. Most practicing counselors and even some faculty may mistakenly believe CACREP accreditation is required for employment in counseling positions. Employers prioritize licensure, clinical competence, and experience — not CACREP accreditation. CACREP accreditation DOES NOT guarantee employment or higher job rates.

MYTH #3: Graduating from a non-CACREP program will prevent you from becoming a licensed professional counselor (LPC or equivalent).

FACT: In 49 states, individuals graduating from non-CACREP programs are eligible to pursue full licensure. These programs must meet specific state criteria, which often mirror or exceed CACREP standards in rigor and quality. Many non-CACREP programs intentionally design curricula that are tailored to state laws and client populations.

MYTH #4: CACREP-accredited programs produce more clinically competent graduates.

FACT: Clinical competence depends on the training quality, supervision, faculty mentorship, and practical experiences — not merely on accreditation. Many non-CACREP programs offer advanced clinical training, robust practicum/internship support, and greater curriculum flexibility.



MYTH #5: Non-CACREP programs are not as rigorous or respected.

FACT: Many non-CACREP programs are housed within regionally accredited, highly respected institutions that exceed state educational standards. These programs often attract experienced faculty, support cutting-edge research, and produce graduates who pass licensure exams at high rates.

MYTH #6: CACREP programs are better because they are standardized.

FACT: While CACREP offers uniformity, this can be limiting — particularly for institutions integrating faith-based values, multicultural frameworks, or unique specializations. Some faith-integrated or innovative programs intentionally forgo CACREP to maintain their core mission and pedagogical independence.

MYTH #7: You can't work for the VA or TRICARE without a CACREP degree.

FACT: As of recent policy updates, the VA and TRICARE recognize licensed professional counselors from non-CACREP programs, provided they meet state licensure requirements. This broadens access and employment opportunities for graduates nationwide.

MYTH #8: CACREP accreditation guarantees ethical and evidence-based training.

FACT: Ethical and evidence-based training is embedded in counselor education standards nationwide and enforced by state licensure boards and institutional policies. Non-CACREP programs are held to the same legal and ethical requirements for clinical practice and counselor preparation.

MYTH #9: CACREP is a neutral accreditor without agenda.

FACT: CACREP's advocacy has influenced public perception and legislation, sometimes to the detriment of diverse counselor education models. Critics argue that CACREP's messaging has at times been misleading, implying exclusivity where none is legally required.

MYTH #10: Students are at a disadvantage if they don't attend a CACREP program.

FACT: Students from non-CACREP programs become licensed, employed, and professionally successful. In fact, non-CACREP programs may offer more personalized education, interdisciplinary learning, and access to spiritually integrated or specialized tracks.

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Contact admissions@cornerstone.edu or call 616.222.1426.

