

**(Antigua and Barbuda) Association for Mental Health Counsellors Inc.
Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025**

CORE VALUES

Professionalism
Transparency
Integrity
Inclusivity
Cultural Relevance
Accountability
Collaboration

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence
Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility
Principle C: Integrity
Principle D: Justice
Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

VISION

The Association aims to be the national professional body for mental health counselors who provide mental health counselling, in Antigua and Barbuda. The Association strives to advance the development of quality mental health care and support by upholding ethical standards for practice, providing continuing education, ensuring public awareness, promoting inclusivity, and exemplifying high professional standards.

MISSION

To promote the professional development of mental health counselors in Antigua and Barbuda; and uphold ethical standards, conduct, respect for diversity in the practice of counselling, and promote research and policy to promote well-being, respect, and social justice.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The objectives, strategies, outcomes and measures for progress associated with these goals are:

GOAL 1: Advancement of the Counselling Profession

Promote the advancement of the knowledge base of counseling and its practice through support for research, education and professional training.

Objectives

- 1.1 Promote and support the advancement of the knowledge base of counseling, both nationally and in the Caribbean region.
- 1.2 Encourage the continued development of education and professional training in counseling to ensure its currency and relevance.
- 1.3 Support the development of the discipline nationally and regionally through appropriate capacity building activities.

Strategies

- A. Broaden the audience for, and participation in, our conferences nationally and regionally.
- B. With our publishing partner, strategically position our quarterly Newsletter to increase citations and international penetration.
- C. Support access to professional development and capacity building opportunities in counseling, education and practice, nationally, regionally, and internationally.
- D. Work with educational providers and partner organisations at pre-tertiary and first-degree levels to ensure that curricula reflect the range of the discipline, its core scientific content and the latest developments.

Outcomes

- Increase in the reputation of our members for being at the forefront of the discipline.
- Increase in knowledge and skill development in emerging areas.
- Increase in regional collaborations to develop the discipline within the Caribbean region.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Number of national and regional delegates at conferences and seminars.
- Number of Newsletter downloads and subscriptions.
- Number of collaborative projects for the development of counseling nationally and regionally.
- Number of instances of collaboration with educational providers and partner organisations on curriculum issues.

GOAL 2: Capacity Building for Mental Health Professionals

Develop the counseling knowledge and professional skills of our members.

Objectives

- 2.1 Enable members to enhance their knowledge and professional skills so that they may contribute to the development of the discipline and the needs of society.
- 2.2 Develop the best possible resources internally and with partners resulting in the creation of programs, products, and services that support successful counseling practice.
- 2.3 Expand ethics-focused resources in support of protecting those who seek counseling services.

2.4 Deliver practice support, technical assistance, information, and resources in formats that are easily accessible by members and other professional counselors.

2.5 Provide new professionals and counselors in training with tools and services that result in meaningful and rewarding jobs.

2.6 Create communities of counseling specialties that facilitate professional peer-to-peer discussions leading to exemplary practice.

Strategies

- A. Provide professional development and capacity building opportunities for members of the Association, and other mental health practitioners, nationally and regionally.
- B. Review and develop our professional development and capacity building opportunities and publishing programmes to ensure that the changing needs of our members are supported throughout their different career stages.
- C. Inform members of new developments and changes in the contexts in which they work.
- D. Provide opportunities for members to share and develop their knowledge and experience.
- E. Develop and disseminate guidance for the profession in key areas of practice.
- F. Support professional training courses in incorporating the best current practice via our professional development and capacity building opportunities and our publications.

Outcomes

- Greater member participation in the Association's professional development offerings and greater satisfaction with the offerings amongst those who engage.
- Greater member usage of the Association's publications and guidelines.
- ABAMHC members and other professional counselors will be viewed as subject matter experts.
- Professional Counselors and counselor educators will recognize ABAMHC as the preeminent knowledge resource hub for the counseling profession.
- Demonstrating to public policy makers, legal entities, and insurance companies that ACA members practice at high standards and can be trusted.
- Development of new resources to meet identified needs not currently served through existing offerings.
- Professional Counselors in all practice settings will recognize ABAMHC as a one-stop shop for the needs they have regardless of the size and scope of their practice.
- Establishes ABAMHC as the "connector of people" who wish to discuss counseling ideas, theories, and practice, rather than simply being a publisher, conference organizer, or product development organization.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Satisfaction ratings for our professional development programme as a whole and for individual components.
- Number of enrollments in our professional development courses and events.
- Number of member downloads of free Association publications.
- Number of practice guidelines produced.

- Number of hits on the member resources areas of our website.

GOAL 3: Improvement in Public Policy and Mental Health Legislation

Maximise the impact of counselling on public policy and mental health legislation.

Objectives

- 3.1 Identify and set an agenda of public significance to promote to policymakers the importance and relevance of counselling.
- 3.2 Work with others, nationally, regionally, and internationally on campaigns and statements on counselling issues.

Strategies

- A. Identify key issues and develop clear position statements to influence policy and requests from public bodies and non-governmental organizations; and communicate these effectively.
- B. Enhance existing partnerships to share our expertise and increase our influence nationally, regionally, and internationally.
- C. Develop new partnerships nationally, regionally, and internationally, including through Memoranda of Understanding, to address issues of mutual importance.

Outcomes

- Greater impact of counseling on public policy making in relevant areas.
- Strengthened relationships with strategic partners and greater impact through collaboration.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Number of requests for, downloads of, and mentions of our position statements.
- Media coverage of policy statements.
- Attendance of invitees at relevant policy events.
- Number of joint statements/campaigns aligned with policy priorities with national, regional, and international partners.

GOAL 4: Awareness Raising and Advocacy

Increase the visibility of counseling and raise public awareness of its contribution to society.

Objectives

- 4.1 Raise the public profile of counselling.
- 4.2 Promote the findings of counseling, counseling practice and its evidence base, and the societal benefit of counseling.
- 4.3 Promote the Association as a relevant source of authoritative comment on matters relating to counseling nationally, regionally, and internationally.
- 4.4 Raise awareness among the public and consumers about the benefits provided by the counseling profession.

4.5 Be recognized by the media, public policy officials, the not-for-profit community, and the public as the voice of the counseling profession.

4.6 Be recognized as an assessor and/or developer of ideas and research that benefit the work of practicing professional counselors.

Strategies

- A. Enhance our public engagement work through high-profile activities which showcase counseling and attract strong, positive media interest.
- B. Encourage and coordinate public engagement activities in areas of significant public and media interest at national, regional, and international levels.
- C. Establish a more visible spokesperson system using senior officers and staff and promote them to media contacts.
- D. Publish summaries of the application of counseling to real-world problems and position statements on practice based upon the best evidence available, both ourselves and in partnership with others.
- E. Engage a broad audience through events designed to achieve maximum impact, both ourselves and in partnership with others.
- F. Identify and publish guidance on evidence-based best practice in applications of counseling across a range of settings and promote it to users and other external audiences.
- G. Support our members in promoting the value of counseling across different professional areas.
- H. Advocate for the inclusion of professional mental health counselling in a wide range of national and regional healthcare and education policies.
- I. Support the right to professional mental health counselling for people whose lives have been disrupted by crime, trauma, or displacement.
- J. Campaign to raise awareness of the efficacy and value of professional mental health counselling.
- K. Promote holistic wellness, prevention, and empowerment that can be achieved through quality counseling services for every human being.
- L. Engage in proactive leadership demonstrated by supporting human rights and social justice issues by advocating for initiatives that reduce the challenges and barriers faced by clients, students, counselors, and communities.
- M. Advocate for adequate funding and initiatives for programs that support clients, students, counselors and communities in areas that include but are not limited to: education; human services; shelter; food insecurity; career preparation; mental health; addictions; civil and human rights; rehabilitation; veterans' issues; bullying; and, anger management.
- N. During times of crisis, as well as non-crisis, professional counseling will be seen as an important resource to reach out to for consultation and information by many facets of society.
- O. Mental health professionals and the public think about ABAMHC as the place to find out about counseling as a profession and a practice.
- P. The ABAMHC conference is recognized as the premier counseling event of the year and attracts an increasing number of attendees in person and virtually.

- Q. Identify and promote research which addresses cultural issues in counselling.
- R. Seek to reduce language and accessibility barriers.

Outcomes

- Greater media coverage of counselling based upon a strong evidence base.
- Greater public understanding of counseling and its significance, nationally.
- Increase in availability of guidance to promote more effective practice and greater uptake by the public.
- Collaboration with various levels of government and with Non-Governmental Organizations so that more people can understand the benefits of professional counseling and the importance of promoting mental health wellness.
- Working at various levels to promote prevention, mental health wellness, and human rights for clients and the communities that professional counselors serve.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Quality media coverage.
- Number of attendees at Association-run public engagement events.
- Use of spokespersons by the media.
- Invitations via the Association for participation in media productions on public service and educational issues.
- Downloads/uptake of guidance/summaries/position statements.
- The number of contacts made by the media, government entities and the public.

GOAL 5: Promote Membership within the Association

Attract new members and broaden our membership base

Objectives

- 5.1 Allow individuals in the general public to access the Association's Newsletters through subscription (here forward referred to as Subscribers/Subscribership)
- 5.2. Open new routes into Association membership and subscribership.
- 5.3 Increase Association member and subscriber numbers.

Strategies

- A. Promote the benefits of membership and subscribership.
- B. Enhance Student membership and promote it to all those who are eligible.
- C. Seek regular feedback from members on the perceived relevance and value of membership.
- D. Develop strategies to encourage members to upgrade and extend their membership at appropriate points in their careers.
- E. Increase membership by raising awareness of the relevance and value of ABAMHC membership.
- F. List national counselling employment opportunities, and professional development and capacity building opportunities on our website.

- G. Expand and enhance the delivery of webinars, roundtables, webcasts and newsletters.
- H. Pro-actively welcome and encourage student participation in ABAMHC, thereby attracting a new generation of counselling leaders nationally.
- I. Improve the ABAMHC website and utilise it as a platform for connectivity and the delivery of information.
- J. Regularly survey ABAMHC members to ensure satisfaction with direction and services.
- K. Monitor and increase retention and engagement of members.
- L. Build a successful online counselling community by utilising networking technology to improve communication, collaboration, and support for counsellors.
- M. Create and maintain an interactive digital venue that encourages the exchange of ideas and resources pertinent to counselling worldwide.
- N. Encourage the sharing of counselling ideas, research, and practices.

Outcomes

- Increase in numbers of members and subscribers at all levels nationally.
- Broader access to the Association for those with related interests, and easier access to other organisations for our members.
- Increase in Student members, who will be encouraged to maintain their relationship with the Association throughout their careers.
- Better reflection of changing member needs in the development of member services and benefits.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Numbers of members and subscribers at all levels.
- Retention rates for members and subscribers.
- Number of reciprocal arrangements with other associations/organisations put in place.
- Number of new members/subscribers via reciprocal arrangements.

GOAL 6: Data Collection and Reporting

Expand and improve the data collection, analysis, evaluation, and dissemination of information related to mental health disorders and receipt of counselling services and services for these conditions to inform policy and programmatic efforts, to assess the effectiveness and quality of services, and to determine the impacts of policies, programs, and practices.

Objectives

- 6.1 Develop consistent data collection strategies to identify and track mental health and substance use needs across the nation.
- 6.2 Ensure that all ABAMHC programs are evaluated in a robust, timely, and high-quality manner.
- 6.3 Promote access to and use of the nation's substance use and mental health data and conduct program and policy evaluations and use the results to advance the adoption of evidence-based policies, programs, and practices.

Strategies

- A. Implement a nationwide survey that will provide information on the public perception about mental health and mental health disorders. Survey will target specific subgroups identified by the Executive Board.
- B. Request and collate disaggregated data from national Mental Health Practitioners and/or Counsellors who provide mental health intervention, services, and support.
- C. Request and collate disaggregated data from government departments, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and the like which provide mental health intervention and services to the public.
- D. Data obtained will be published in the quarterly Newsletter in a way that is understandable by the general public. Publication will include raw data and a statistical analysis.
- E. Pursue new data collections that provide updated national estimates on the incidence and prevalence of specific mental health disorders and receipt of services for those conditions.
- F. Expand access to mental health data by releasing annual reports in a timely and efficient manner and ensuring continuous and seamless public access to mental health data.
- G. Strengthen partnerships with communities, stakeholders, and other government agencies to increase understanding of the prevalence, patterns, trends, and program data, including risk and protective factors, on mental illness.
- H. Develop and disseminate effective data-driven reports, resources, and tools to assist clinicians, policymakers, community practitioners, patients, and the public in efforts to advance prevention, treatment, and recovery of mental health disorders.
- I. Advance the use of evidence-based, data-driven programs, practices, and policies to prevent and to treat mental health disorders and to support recovery through rigorous evaluations of innovative and promising approaches and the replication and scaling of evidence-based interventions.

Outcomes

- Better reflection of public perceptions surrounding mental health.
- Greater understanding of the incidence and prevalence of mental health disorders in the nation.
- Collaboration with various community partners to promote prevention, treatment, and recovery of mental health disorders to inform policy and program development and resource allocation.

Measures for Progress

- Public participation in the national surveys.
- Receipt of disaggregated data from Mental Health Practitioners, Counsellors, and other appropriate mental health care providers.
- Recognition and validation of the Association's reported/published data by the general public, government, and the media.

GOAL 7: Organizational Advancement

Develop our organisation to support change in order to achieve the substantive strategic goals (1–6), the Association will need to:

7.1 Ensure that members are able to contribute their expertise and support to our activities through transparent and coordinated procedures, which promote, welcome and facilitate their involvement.

7.2 Achieve a governance structure in which the roles and expectations of the constituent parts are clear, structural barriers removed and collaboration facilitated.

7.3 Achieve operational processes that are able to respond flexibly and in a timely manner to the Association's aims and priority areas while supporting and developing the salaried staff.

7.4 Ensure efficiency, timeliness and fitness for the purpose of both internal and external communication.

7.5 Achieve financial sustainability through careful operational and financial planning, which seeks to generate sufficient income from existing and new activities to support the Association's strategic goals.

The objective, strategies, outcomes and measures for progress associated with these are listed as follows.

Objective 7.1

Ensure that members are able to contribute their expertise and support to our activities through transparent and coordinated procedures, which promote, welcome and facilitate their involvement.

Strategies

- A. Encourage practitioners to critically reflect on their own practice.
- B. Promote the exchange and dissemination of counselling research knowledge nationally.
- C. Review and enhance the procedures by which members provide input to Association activities to ensure transparency and ease of access.
- D. Review the materials used to recruit volunteers to emphasise the value of their contributions.
- E. Develop an e-voting system and process.
- F. Develop resources (human, financial and technological) that support growth and development of the individual counsellor and the profession nationally.

Outcomes

- Enhanced satisfaction from members with the Association and their role within it.
- Greater input from Member Networks and individual members to Association to consultations and surveys.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Satisfaction ratings in membership surveys.
- Competition for advertised roles within the Association.
- Turnout for Association elections.
- Numbers of responses to consultations and surveys.

Objective 7.2

Achieve a governance structure in which the roles and expectations of the constituent parts are clear, structural barriers removed and collaboration facilitated.

Strategies

- A. Review and improve the role specifications for all member governance positions.
- B. Review and ensure clarity in the purposes/ terms of reference/ decision-making /reporting lines for all Member Networks and their constituent groups.
- C. Review and enhance the opportunities for collaboration across Member Network boundaries.
- D. Review and enhance induction programmes for Association roles.

Outcomes

- Greater clarity in members' understanding of the structure of the Association and its governance processes.
- Greater collaboration across Member Network boundaries.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Number of cross-network collaborative activities.
- Measured satisfaction with clarity of relevant information and inductions.

Decreases in:

- Number of enquiries seeking clarity on governance roles and responsibilities.

Objective 7.3

Achieve operational processes that are able to respond flexibly and in a timely manner to the Association's aims while supporting and developing the salaried staff.

Strategies

- A. Undertake a rolling review and, where appropriate and possible, streamline operational processes to make them as responsive and flexible as possible.
- B. Ensure that the training and development plans for staff members take account of the operational requirements of the new Strategic Plan.
- C. Ensure that our infrastructure is fit for the purpose of underpinning and enabling our strategic goals.

Outcomes

- Increased ability of the office to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan.
- Greater efficiency in the administration and infrastructure underpinning the Association's activities.
- Greater member satisfaction with office processes.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Satisfaction ratings in member surveys.
- Performance against Terms of Reference (TOR) for relevant positions within the Association.
- Focus on the delivery of strategic objectives in management reviews of the performance of staff and their training needs.

Objective 7.4

Ensure the efficiency, timeliness and fitness for the purpose of our internal and external communication.

Strategies

- A. Review and further develop our internal communication channels.
- B. Review and develop our external communication strategies to ensure optimal impact.
- C. Review, develop and support our website to enhance accessibility of information and ease of navigation.

Outcomes

- More efficient, better targeted and appropriate communication between staff, with members and between members.
- Greater member satisfaction with Association external messaging.
- Greater member and staff satisfaction with the website.

Measures for progress

Increases in:

- Satisfaction of members with external messaging.
- Media take-up of external communication.
- Key analytics on use of website.
- Member and staff satisfaction with the website.

Objective 7.5

Achieve financial sustainability through careful operational and financial planning, which seeks to generate sufficient income from existing and new activities to support the Association's strategic goals.

Strategies

- A. Solicit donor and special grants funding to support the existing and new activities and goals of the Association.
- B. Further develop the annual business planning process to ensure that funding allocations are coordinated to support the strategic goals.
- C. Undertake periodic reviews of our financial systems to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
- D. Undertake regular scenario planning to review the impact of contextual factors upon the Association's financial status.

- E. Undertake rolling reviews of income streams to identify opportunities for further development or new areas.
- F. Undertake regular reviews of purchasing agreements with suppliers to ensure optimal cost control.

Outcomes

- Better coordinated financial planning across the Association's Member Networks and activities.
- Financial systems that deliver appropriate and timely management information to support monitoring and planning.
- A healthy balance sheet, with spending directed to support the Association's strategic goals.

Measures for progress

- Satisfactory positive balance in annual financial outcome post audit.
- Positive balances for all income streams unless a planned deficit has been agreed.
- Demonstrable control of costs of goods and services relative to period baseline.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The (Antigua and Barbuda) Association of Mental Health Counsellors Inc. Strategic Action Plan 2021 - 2025 is an adaptation of The British Psychological Society Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020, the American Counseling Association Strategic Framework 2018 - 2021, the International Association for Counselling Strategy 2016 - 2021, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Strategic Plan FY2019 - FY2023. Inquiries concerning the substance or interpretation of the Association's Strategic Action Plan should be addressed to the Executive Board, (Antigua and Barbuda) Association of Mental Health Counsellors Inc. of Mental Health Counsellors.