

END OF YEAR REPORT for 2022

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COAMFTE

Commission on Accreditation for
Marriage and Family Therapy Education

Letter from COAMFTE Leadership

Dear Colleagues:

In 2022, COAMFTE continued to implement steps supporting the semi-autonomous governance of the Commission, which is required by Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and was established by the 2018 AAMFT bylaws. A primary strategy was to focus on steps supporting the sustainability of the Commission as well as decreasing financial dependence upon AAMFT. This year has also focused on the continued scaffolding of the expertise in our COAMFTE volunteer pool. The Commission has done this through updated and expanding training, mentoring, and providing continued support and engagement of our communities of interest to advance the practice and profession. COAMFTE also implemented Accreditation Standards v. 12.5 and provided resources to our community of interest.

COAMFTE is proud of the work accomplished during 2022 in response to the 2022 AAMFT Charge, and is pleased to share the 2022 End of Year Report.

Dr. Carol Messmore, Chair
Dr. David Van Dyke, Chair-Elect

Strengthening COAMFTE Governance and Policies

The Commission continues to develop, revise and implement new policies and procedures to align with best practice of accreditation and the new 2021 Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Recognition Standards.

Goals: Transitioning and enhancing the COAMFTE governance structure; formalized role, responsibilities and needed skills for strategic and effective commission volunteers identifying any skills gap; continued revision of policies and procedures to fully align with the 12.5 COAMFTE standards and current CHEA Recognition Standards

Responding to Charges: To continue the examination and implementation of strategies that lead toward a decrease in financial dependence on AAMFT without compromising the mission of COAMFTE or impairing its function as the premier accrediting body for marriage and family therapy academic and training programs.

To provide oversight and ensure quality MFT education through accreditation to support public protection.

COAMFTE Policy and Procedure Revisions

The Commission continuously researches, develops, and implements policies and procedures to align with feedback from communities of interest, with expectations of professional accreditors, and with recommended practices of accreditation process (CHEA Standard 3.G.). In 2022, the Policy and Strategy Subcommittee was charged to review and revise the current COAMFTE Accreditation Manual: Policy and Procedures to align with CHEA Recognition Standards 2021. The Policy and Strategy Subcommittee conducted the following tasks to address the charges in 2022:

- Clarified procedures for programs entering into the Renewal Process that have outstanding non-compliance issues (CHEA Standard 3.D.)

- Modified the Public Notice procedures for additional public transparency (CHEA Standard 2.A.)
- Updated Eligibility Criteria Review procedures to align with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 and ensure standards are met in an acceptable time period (CHEA Standard 3.D.)
- Modified the Appeals policy to ensure procedural due process for accredited programs (CHEA Standards 3.J. and 3.K.)
- Revised Substantive Change and Branch Location policies to support implementation of innovative practices (CHEA Standard 1.D.)
- Strengthened policies that align with AAMFT Bylaws Article 8, CHEA Standard 3.H. and ASPA Code of Good Practice.

The updated [COAMFTE Accreditation Manual: Policy and Procedures](#) was published to the COAMFTE website on December 1, 2022 with the following changes:

Addition to the Renewal of Accreditation Process: The Commission added a procedure to address issues of programs entering into the renewal of accreditation with outstanding non-compliance. Programs are expected to make every effort to resolve non-compliance before the self-study submission.

Updates of Public Notice Procedures: Public Notice procedures were updated to align with transparency requirements to provide greater accessible communication of accreditation decisions to the public. Action letters summarizing COAMFTE accreditation decisions can be found on the [COAMFTE website here](#).

Clarification of Eligibility Criteria Review in the Accreditation Process: The process for Review of the Eligibility Criteria Document was clarified and formalized to support programs through the submission and revision process and to specify reviewer procedures that ensure consistency of review.

Modification of the Appeals Policy: The COAMFTE policy for Appeals of Adverse Accreditation Decisions was modified to align with current appeal processes and contemporary best practices. Fees have also been updated to cover the costs associated with appeal procedures and hearings, which are [posted on the COAMFTE website](#).

Revision of Substantive Change and Branch Location policy and notification of Distance Education procedures: Over the past few years, the Commission continued to research the changing higher education landscape and accreditation procedures related to distance education with various delivery formats (e.g., mixed learning, high flex, online only). In 2022, the Commission revised the substantive change procedures, including new application forms and procedures for demonstrating compliance with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 and to support programs shifting permanently to a delivery format utilizing distance education as well as making substantial changes in its curriculum/content. In addition, the virtual branch policy was eliminated and is now addressed in the substantive change policy. The branch location policy was updated to be specific for programs adding a location that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution.

Strengthening Governance Composition with attention to Expertise, Experience, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



The COAMFTE Chair charged the Policy and Strategy Subcommittee to continue to develop policies and strategies that support the Commission's progression toward a semi-autonomous strategic board. Many of the innovative pilot projects that were formalized in 2021 have now been formally implemented in 2022, intended to support COAMFTE's board structure that is separate and distinct from AAMFT.

In 2020 and 2021, COAMFTE revised policies related to qualifications, criteria, and skills needed by the Commission and associated committees, workgroups, and taskforces. With the enactment of these revised policies and procedures in 2022, COAMFTE provided increased opportunities which expand the pools of eligible candidates that are inclusive of different experience levels and support the diverse and inclusive commitment of COAMFTE. This expansion further supports the expertise and leadership experience necessary for the Commission.

In 2022, the Commission focused on ensuring that the composition of the Commission consists of professional members who have the expertise, skills, and meet the eligibility requirements according to the COAMFTE Manual Policy and Procedures that were updated in 2021. At the Fall 2022 COAMFTE Meeting, the Commission voted to update the COAMFTE policy and procedures related to nomination and election procedures to protect the integrity of the COAMFTE governance composition, COAMFTE accreditation process, and ensuring sufficient number of qualified candidates to serve as Commission Professional Members in accordance with AAMFT Bylaws Article 8, 2021 Council of Higher Education Accreditation Recognition Standards, ASPA Code of Good Practice, Association of Governing Boards and required practices in accreditation.

Please find the COAMFTE Nomination and Election policies and procedures attached.

Resources and Trainings for Transitioning to Version 12.5 Standards

Goal: Shaping and building a skill-based COAMFTE community, enhancing engagement with COAMFTE programs.

Responding to Charge: To stimulate the improvement of professional marriage and family therapy education, including helping training institutions and agencies develop quality programs by fostering ongoing Self-Study and development.

Resources for Transitioning to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5

The 2022 Standards Revision Committee developed and published the following resources intended to support program success in the site visit process, and to foster consistent interpretation by COAMFTE volunteers/reviewers.

- Site Visitor Questions grouped by category for Standards Version 12.5
- Streamlined Site Visit Report Template
- Rubric for Site Visitor guidance

Trainings for Site Visitors, Commissioners, and Accreditation Reviewers

The COAMFTE Education and Training Subcommittee created and implemented:

- A self-paced interactive Site Visitor Training for Standards Version 12.5 with video presentations, example program reviews, and rigorous exercises;
- An onboarding training for Accreditation Reviewers for Standards Version 12.5, including development of step by step resources for reviewing as well as mentoring for ongoing review support;
- A self-guided Review Training with video presentations on compliance requirements for Standards Version 12.5, example program reviews, and rigorous exercises for Commissioners and Accreditation Review Committee members; and
- Updated the Annual Report Review Training and Review Guide for Reviewers.

2022 COAMFTE Accreditation Workshop

COAMFTE hosted the 2022 COAMFTE Accreditation Workshop to assist programs in preparation for the self-study and changes related to the 12.5 standards. The workshop agenda attracted both currently accredited programs as well as programs new to accreditation with over 80 participants in attendance from start to finish. Below are the highlights of the topics shared by the Commission with programs during the Workshop:

- Incorporating Teletherapy into the Curriculum
- Planning for successful data gathering and entering into the self-study process
- Navigating the Eligibility Criteria
- Maintaining Accreditation and the new Annual Report requirements
- Understanding Curriculum Requirements specific to Doctoral Programs
- Closing the Assessment Loop – communicating improvements and changes

Stakeholder Engagement and Communities of Interest Relationships

COAMFTE makes an effort to engage with stakeholders on a regular basis by sending informative communications, interacting during trainings, and creating increased opportunities for volunteer involvement on COAMFTE committees.

Goals: Engaging with stakeholders to communicate value of COAMFTE accreditation, enhancing engagement with COAMFTE programs.

Shaping and building a skill-based COAMFTE community, enhancing engagement with COAMFTE programs.

Responding to Charge: Stimulating the improvement of professional marriage and family therapy education, including helping training institutions and agencies develop quality programs by fostering ongoing Self-Study and development.

Supporting the COAMFTE Community in the Accreditation Process

The Commission convened the 2023 Training Task Force to research the prospect of holding a large training and networking event for the COAMFTE community in 2023. COAMFTE charged the Training Task Force to research training events of other accreditation organizations for best practices, collect stakeholder feedback for training ideas and input into the planning phase, determine audience, investigate physical and financial resources needed for the event, and identify a date and location for the event.

Based on the research and survey results, the Training Task Force proposed the following goals for the training event:

- Facilitate interactive workshops for Program Directors to maintain and seek COAMFTE accreditation
- Provide consulting opportunities and presentations on current COAMFTE Standards and the related process required for continued accreditation.
- Offer networking sessions in breakouts and round table discussions in a collaborative format

Some of the preliminary topics planned include:

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Teletherapy in the Curriculum
- Closing the Loop of the Assessment Cycle
- Examples of evidence/documentation needed to show compliance specific to Standards
- Keynote to discuss history to future of COAMFTE and alignment with shifts of larger accreditation matters and CHEA recognition standards

These goals will be included in the 2023 Accreditation Workshop format that will be held in Tampa, Florida on October 18-19, 2023.

Standards Review Committee Research and Resources

The Standards Review Committee (SRC) conducted research with programs regarding the definitions, methods, and barriers regarding supervision using Observable “Raw” Data. In review of the results (52 responses), the SRC learned that many programs are unclear about what “counts” as observable data supervision, how that is linked to direct hours, and the role of program clinical supervisors in providing it. In an effort to provide additional clarification, the SRC created two resources in the format of decision trees to assist faculty, supervisors and students to have increased understanding regarding who can provide observable data supervision, what “counts” as observable data in supervision, and how reflecting teams can be considered part of observable data supervision. The observable “raw” data supervision resources can be found on [the COAMFTE website here](#).

Communicating with Additional Stakeholders

- **Meetings with Tracy Todd:** The COAMFTE Leadership Team met three times with the CEO of AAMFT. The main focus of these meetings in 2022 was to maintain transparency of operations with AAMFT, and to learn of changes in AAMFT that could impact COAMFTE.
- **Meetings with AMFTRB:** The COAMFTE Leadership Team also met with representatives from AMFTRB quarterly. Discussion focused on the use of teletherapy and tele-supervision in MFT programs as allowed in the Accreditation Standards Version 12.5.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)

COAMFTE will be entering into the renewal of recognition process with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in 2023.

Goal: Complying with and maintaining recognition of CHEA standards

Responding to Charge: Providing an authoritative guide to programs in the field of marriage and family therapy, which deserve public and professional confidence and support, including providing prospective students with a dependable basis for the selection of educational programs and providing state boards which license or certify marriage and family therapists with a list of accredited graduate degree and post-degree programs.

Public Notification on COAMFTE Website (CHEA Standard 2.A.)

The [COAMFTE website](#) was updated to inform the public of the program's accreditation status with the following:

- Notice of Action procedure and posting most recent Notice of Actions, including downloadable copies of the final action letters of the Accreditation Decision
- Listing of historical actions on the COAMFTE website
- Summary or brief description of the accreditation status and its meaning

Program Directory on COAMFTE Website (CHEA Standard 2.B.)

The COAMFTE Program Directory is maintained to reflect transparent and publicly accessible information including each program's accreditation status and contextual information. Information in the directory is intended to assist prospective students so that they can make informed choices, and to provide details of a program's current accreditation status to relevant stakeholders and to the public. Most recently, a link to the program's Graduate Achievement Data required for Standards Version 12.5 is now available in the COAMFTE Program Directory.

Program Accreditation: Initial, Renewal, Maintenance

Through the process of reviewing and granting accreditation to programs that demonstrated substantial compliance with COAMFTE Accreditation Standards Version 12.0 and Version 12.5, the Commission reviewed programs for initial, renewal, and maintenance of accreditation.

Goal: Maintaining Quality MFT Education

Responding to Charge: Ongoing oversight and assurance of quality MFT education through accreditation.

The Commission reviewed the following at the Spring and Fall COAMFTE Meetings in 2022.

Type of Review	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Total 2022
<i>Initial Accreditation</i>	0	1	1
<i>Renewal of Accreditation</i>	7	9	16
<i>Response to Stipulations</i>	4	2	6
<i>Annual Reports</i>	61	61	122
<i>Plan of Closure</i>	1	0	1
<i>Corrective Action</i>	1	0	1
<i>Total</i>	74	73	147

The Eligibility Review Committee reviewed 18 Eligibility Criteria Reports. The Commission and Accreditation Reviewers reviewed a total of 26 Self-Studies, and COAMFTE conducted 16 Virtual Site Visits and 4 campus-based Site Visits in 2022.

Currently COAMFTE accredits 123 programs:

- 28 Doctoral programs
- 91 Master’s programs
- 4 Post-Degree programs

Complaints

In 2022, the Commission revoked accreditation of one program after an 18 month investigation in response to two complaints.

COAMFTE Sustainability

Goal: Increasing revenue through additional fee restructuring

Responding to Charge: Examination and implementation of strategies that lead toward a decrease in financial dependence on AAMFT

The Policy and Strategy Committee reviewed comparable accreditor fee structures associated with the appeals process and substantive changes. During the 2022 fall meeting, the Commission voted to update the following fees.

Accreditation Process	Fees in 2023
Appeal Fee that includes preparation costs (\$6,500 non-refundable) and hearing expenses (\$3,500)	\$10,000.00
Substantive Change that requires Application Form and prior approval	\$610.00

The changes in the COAMFTE Fees will be posted on the [COAMFTE website](#) in January 2023.

COAMFTE Volunteers

The Commission is grateful for the commitment and dedication of COAMFTE volunteers who are essential to the compliance work and accomplishments of the Commission. In 2022, COAMFTE volunteers served on committees to address strategic planning which impacts the quality of MFT training programs, and to develop streamlined resources to support communities transitioning to the new standards.

[Standards Review Committee members](#)

[Eligibility Review Committee members](#)

[Accreditation Reviewer Program members](#)

[Active Site Visitors](#)

2022 Commissioners

Carol Messmore, PhD – Chair

David VanDyke, PhD – Chair Elect

Blake Berryhill, PhD

Lee Johnson, PhD

Heather Katafiasz, PhD

Aaron Norton, PhD

Jaclyn Cravens Pickens, PhD

Nancy Shankle, PhD, Public Member

Michael Westerfield, PhD, Public Member

2022 COAMFTE Elections Results

Sara Blakeslee Salkil, PhD – 3-year term

Darren Moore, PhD – 3-year term

Michael Westerfield, PhD – will serve a second 3-year term as Public Member

2022 Chair-Elect Election Results

Heather Katafiasz, PhD - elected as the 2024 COAMFTE Chair. She will serve as the Chair Elect in 2023.

Call for Volunteers in 2022

COAMFTE's aggressive call for volunteers attracted many new candidates for the COAMFTE community who will expand the subject matter expertise which drives the accreditation process.

- 3 new Accreditation Reviewers were appointed for 2023 and 4 renewed their term
- 6 new Eligibility Reviewers were appointed for 2023 and 4 renewed their term
- 6 new Standard Review Committee members
- 3 new Site Visitors