



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors; and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.


IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:

- A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
- A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
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- A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM's study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,



Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable James H. Webb
Chairman, Subcommittee on Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors; and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

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Sincerely,



Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Lindsey O. Graham
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

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Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Susan Davis
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

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Sincerely,



Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Joe Wilson
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

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Sincerely,



Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
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Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
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Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
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The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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APR 27 2010

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
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Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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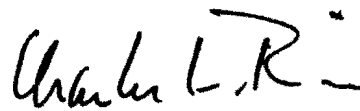
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Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
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Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable C. W. Bill Young
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

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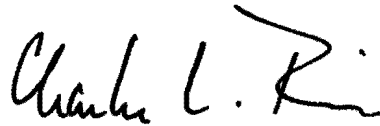
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles L. Rice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" at the end.

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

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HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Daniel Akaka
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

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The Honorable John Ensign
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Solomon P. Ortiz
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested Members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:

- A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.

- A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
- Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
- A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program and your interest in expanding access to health care for our beneficiaries.

Sincerely,



Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Randy Forbes
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Tim Johnson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Administration, & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

APR 27 2010

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Administration, & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of
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Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Zach Wamp
Ranking Member