

Chapter 15

Gatekeeper Wellness: Trauma-Informed Practices for Professional Sustainability

Susan Branco

✉ <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0414-8921>

Palo Alto University, USA

Connie T. Jones

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Counselor educators and supervisors are ethically responsible for gatekeeping as mandated by the American Counseling Association ethical codes. Yet, gatekeeping practices and training are seldom discussed within doctoral counselor education and supervision training. The silence surrounding gatekeeping negatively impacts counselor educators and supervisors who bear an undue burden of related emotional labor in isolation. While most of the peer-reviewed literature and research examines gatekeeping practices, process, and their impact on counseling students in remediation, less is known about supportive strategies for counselor educators and supervisors. Trauma-informed practices can be applied as one supportive framework possibility for counselor educators and supervisors. The co-authors describe gatekeeping strategies situated within the six tenets of trauma-informed practice.

INTRODUCTION

Counselor educators and supervisors are ethically responsible for gatekeeping as mandated by the American Counseling Association ethical codes (2014). Yet, gatekeeping practices and training are seldom discussed within doctoral counselor

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education and supervision training (DeCino et al., 2020). The silence surrounding gatekeeping negatively impacts counselor educators and supervisors who often bear an undue burden of related emotional labor in isolation (DeCino et al., 2020). While much of the peer-reviewed literature and research examines gatekeeping practices, process, and their impact on counseling students in remediation (Chang & Rubel, 2019; Kimball et al., 2019; Schuerman et al., 2017), less is known about supportive strategies for counselor educators and supervisors specifically.

Trauma-informed practices can be applied as one supportive framework possibility for counselor educators and supervisors. The co-authors describe gatekeeping strategies situated within the six tenets of Trauma-Informed Practice (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, 2014): 1) Safety, 2) Trustworthiness, 3) Choice, 4) Collaboration, 5) Empowerment, and 6) Culture, Historical and Gender Issues. Each tenet, through composite case examples, will outline practices and strategies that explicitly support and sustain counselor educators and supervisors. Implicitly, increased gatekeeping support for counselor educators and supervisors will ultimately benefit counselor education students and supervisees in remediation. First, we will explore what is known about counselor educator experiences as gatekeepers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on gatekeeping in counselor education explores processes, procedures, and impact on students (Chang & Rubel, 2019; Kimball et al., 2019; Schuerman et al., 2017). Extant research exists on the gatekeeping experiences of counselor educators. Yet what is known overwhelmingly emphasizes the profound emotional labor counselor educators expend to support students in their programs. The emotionality is conflated with the threat of or actual litigation. We found commonalities across the counselor educator gatekeeping experiences regarding emotional labor, supportive factors, and the influence of ethical responsibility which we review next.

Emotional Labor

Almost two decades ago, Jackson-Cherry (2006) offered a description of the consequences to counselor educator faculty that can occur during gatekeeping processes. They described the demoralization gatekeepers can experience when they follow ethical guidelines and due process yet are not supported by their professional body. Next, Kerl and Eicher (2007) compellingly shared risks to counselor educators personally and professionally that are compounded when the emotional experiences of gatekeeping are not validated or supported. They likened the disruptive and at times, disorienting experiences of gatekeeping, to trauma-based incidents like as-

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