



**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
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**ADVISORY MEMORANDUM #02-04**

**TO:** Directors, Area Mental Health Programs  
Directors, Departments of Public Health  
Directors, Departments of Social Services  
Local Jurisdictions HR Directors

**FROM:** Thomas H. Wright

**SUBJECT:** Appropriate Accreditation for Institutions of Higher Education

Applicants for state employment presenting degrees obtained from non-accredited institutions have proliferated recently, particularly with the abundance of electronically delivered distance learning programs that are now available. However, the academic quality and accountability of non-accredited degree programs can vary widely. For this reason, effective immediately, degrees from inappropriately accredited or unaccredited institutions of higher education should not be counted toward the educational requirements for any established classification. Current classification standards are being revised to reflect this policy. In the meanwhile, you should ensure that all postings contain a statement that degrees must be from appropriately accredited institutions.

Appropriate accreditation consists of accreditation from one of the following most common regional accrediting organizations:

- **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACS)** - this agency awards the accreditation to degree granting institutions of higher education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Web address: [www.sacs.org](http://www.sacs.org)
- **Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA)** - Web address: [www.msache.org](http://www.msache.org)
- **New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC-CIHE) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education** - Web address: [www.neasc.org](http://www.neasc.org)
- **North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA-HLC) The Higher Learning Commission** - Web address: [www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org](http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org)
- **Northwest Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (NWA) Commission on Colleges and Universities** - Web address: [www.nwccu.org](http://www.nwccu.org)

- **Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC-ACSCU) Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities** - Web address: [www.wascweb.org](http://www.wascweb.org)

The websites for each of these accrediting organizations contains a list of institutions accredited by the organization.

In addition, you should be aware that although the U.S. Department of Education does not accredit educational institutions and/or programs, the Secretary of Education is required by law to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that are determined to be reliable authorities as to the quality of education or training. If an application lists an institution that is not found on one of the above nationally recognized accrediting agencies, please feel free to check other nationally recognized accrediting organizations listed on the U.S. Department of Education website: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov). In addition, you may also check the website for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. This is a private, nonprofit national organization that provides formal recognition to higher education accreditation bodies and provides a comprehensive directory of participating or recognized accrediting organizations. The web address is [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org).

Applicants who have obtained their education outside of the U.S. and its territories must have their academic degrees validated as equivalent to the degree conferred by a regionally accredited college or university in the U.S. There are several organizations that perform this specialized service. A sampling of these organizations includes the following:

- **International Education Research Foundation** – (310) 390-6276 and [www.ierf.org](http://www.ierf.org)
- **World Education Services, Inc.** – (800) 937-3895 and [www.wes.org](http://www.wes.org)

Please contact OSP, or assigned OSP HR Partner if you have questions or concerns regarding this information. Thank you in advance for you attention to this matter.

THW/pjm

c: Drake Maynard, HR Managing Partner  
Patrick McCoy, HR Partner  
Local Government Program Team