

**TO: Commission for Certified Equine Facilitated Mental Health and Education Professionals**

**From: Ariana Strozzi, President, EGEA**

**RE: The Commission's Certification Process**

**Date: May 15, 2008**

This letter is in response to the email from Dr. Nancy Waite-O'Brien that was sent to EAGALA and forwarded to us.

While we appreciate the efforts of all of the people who have put their time into the development of this certification test, there are numerous concerns we have that would need to be addressed before we would consider endorsing it. We feel that it is important to bring them up at this time so that the commission can consider our concerns before taking further action to promote or develop the certification test. If the commission's intent is to provide certification and testing for EFP (associated with EFMHA) professionals alone, then the points we mention may be mute. But if the intent of the commission is to provide certification and testing for all professionals in the field including EAP and EGE, then our concerns appear to be valid and worth considering.

Please note that while June Gunter, co-founder of EGEA, has been part of the commission, we feel that we need to make it clear that her involvement does not and never has implied endorsement by EGEA. We felt that her involvement was important to assure that the test respectfully honored the horse as 'guide' which is one of EGEA's commitments.

Please consider some of our concerns listed below.

1. To date it is our opinion that the commission has not efficiently approached our association in a respectful manner. Thus, we have felt a lack of inclusiveness from the inception of this project. The one contact that the commission made to EGEA on January 22, 2007 in a document titled, "Item Review letter of Invitation.doc" was made after the commission had been formed, named and established. We were not included at its inception to discuss a name for the commission that would serve all of the organizations. In fact, it originated from groundwork which had been laid by EFMHA as stated in the above-mentioned letter. To invite us to participate on a commission (whose name is directly associated with EFMHA and not inclusive of EAGALA or EGEA) in order to create an umbrella credential for all of us feels disrespectful. We apologize that we did not express this to you at the time of your invitation, but feel that it is important to do so now.
2. If the intention of the commission is to create a national test that includes and respects all of the various approaches to 'horse as healer/teacher', and thus help to unify the discourse and provide a test for professional skill (as it implies in its advertisements), then it stands to reason that the commission should have requested the advice, wisdom and opinion of EAGALA and EGEA before the commission was officially formed, named and established. Since this has not been the case, the projects that the commission has been working on looks like a certification for EFMHA alone.
3. The term 'Certified' in the name of the commission and title of professionals to be developed seems premature and inappropriate at this time. Let's look at ICF to demonstrate our point. The ICF (International Coaching Federation) offers a certification for coaches from a variety of coach schools. But what ICF has that we don't have is a name. All coach schools train 'coaches'. We do not have a unified name, which in EGEA's opinion, is a far more complex and important issue

than a certification. Because without a unified name we cannot have a unified certification or credential. This issue is discussed further in #6.

4. The title of the commission itself is an issue for a number of reasons.
  - a. The name of the commission is too long and wordy. The majority of the people, even the professionals who have worked for the commission cannot even remember its name. This is a problem at a very basic level.
  - b. The term “certified” is ambiguous and confusing as mentioned above.
  - c. The commission is for certified “Facilitated” mental health and education professionals. The word, “facilitated” is directly associated with EFMHA and excludes EAGALA/EAP and EGEA/EGE. Is the commission implying that we should all be EFP’s?
  - d. The use of “mental health professional” in the name of the commission again implies that we all need to be mental health professionals and thus is misleading. The very name of the commission does not include coaches and educators who are a predominant part of the profession.
  - e. We agree with EAGALA’s concerns regarding the term “Commission.”
  
5. The names of the credentials (CEFIP-mental health) and (CEFIP-Education) are confusing, too wordy and misleading.
  - a. The term ‘certified’ is ambiguous as mentioned earlier.
  - b. The term ‘facilitated’ implies EFMHA and does not include the other approaches of EAP and EGE.
  - c. The term ‘interaction’ is unnecessary and confusing.
  
6. What seems to be of biggest concern is that it feels like the test and certification planned by the board is putting the cart before the horse. We have not come together as representative organizations to discuss the larger issue; we do not have a name or title that represents the general phenomena of “horse as healer/teacher.” What we do have at this time are 3 main streams of this work, EAP, EGE and EFP.
  - a. Over the last 3-4 years there has been a dramatic increase in the bastardization of acronyms. At last count, we counted over 40 acronyms. This in an of itself is causing tremendous confusion, not only among us professionals, but is ultimately turning away potential customers and beneficiaries of this work.
  - b. It stands to reason if there are different types of learning styles then there should be different kinds of teaching models to accommodate the diversity. EAP, EGE and EFP currently represent the diversity required. Other acronyms are unnecessary.
  - c. The future of this work is of great importance to all of us. Perhaps we have been looking at it from a narrow perspective. 10-15 years from now, the majority of incoming professionals will be high school graduates entering college. We should be focusing on the future of the industry rather than trying to corral current professionals.

EAGALA, EGEA and several professors have been discussing the importance of defining and developing a college major that would cover the universal principles, concepts, skills required to become a professional in the field.. By focusing on a future college course of study consisting of a BA and an MA, we could define a name for the profession (like nurse, chiropractor has for theirs). The BA would give students the basic knowledge in psychology (depth and eco) somatics, equine behavior and management, etc., upon completing the BA a potential professional would then complete a MA in either a therapy or coaching model of specific emphasis on EAP, EGE or EFP.

By focusing on developing a unified college curriculum (with a unified name) and course of study for future professionals we would be providing a much more solid future for this

work that we all know is so important. And, we would not need a written test to prove certification.

7. Your public statement that, “*CCEFMHEP is the only organization providing certification based on theoretical grounding in broad competencies that meet national credentialing standards*”, is insulting to say the least.
  - a. Both EAGALA and EGEA have a successful and proven Certification processes that includes experiential trainings based on established curriculum, mentored practice, reading and other assignments, in addition to the individual’s existing credentials and curriculum vitae.
  - b. The use of the words “**only**” is a mis-representation to the public and to professionals in the field and we request that you remove the word ‘only’ from your statements, website and advertisements.
  
8. While the previous concerns mentioned above are the most important and relevant, we have concerns about supporting the test itself. While June has seen the test and I trust her competence in representing our perspective in creating and selecting the test questions, I, as the president of EGEA, have not seen the test. I cannot even begin to consider supporting it or endorsing it for whatever future use without seeing it.
  - a. We have additional concerns that a written test in a multiple choice format ay be inadequate and inefficient to determine competency. Some people have a very difficult time with multiple-choice questions. Even some of the sample questions offered were of some concern. Note that the national Certification Commission is currently discussing and reporting concerns with written exams.

Our overall impression is that the commission looks like a certification for EFMHA professionals made up of primarily EFMHA professionals Our goal in this letter is not to offend the board or EFMHA in any way, but to honestly state our opinions and concerns about the commission. We want to acknowledge and appreciate all of the hard work that the individuals have put into developing the test. The test and its contents may be a very useful tool in the future or if the commission decides to limit its focus to EFMHA professionals only. But if the intention is to be an umbrella certification, the name of the commission needs to change, the certification names need to change, and we need to be respectfully included.

We look forward to any additional dialogue.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ariana Strozzi  
President, EGEA