



**A Message from Sonia Peterson, Ph.D., CRC, LPCC
President, American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (2021-2022)**

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for electing me as the 2021-2022 ARCA President. I genuinely appreciate the privilege to serve you and our profession.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) and our ARCA board continues to focus on outreach and sharing information relevant to our counseling profession as we navigate a global pandemic, counselor license portability, and legislation impacting our communities. Specific to our rehabilitation counseling specialty, we offer our membership continued support regarding the recent CORE/CACREP accreditation merger, the practice of vocational rehabilitation, and disability advocacy. My hope as ARCA President is to continue to connect with you, to seek opportunities for us to strengthen our professional identity as rehabilitation counselors, and to infuse the counseling profession at large with our social justice principles of self-determination, advocacy, and inclusion. The ARCA board recently approved a set of disability-related counseling competencies for the ACA website available at <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/competencies>.

The two biggest barriers that individuals with significant disabilities face in our society are social isolation and poverty. Encouraging the clients that we work with as rehabilitation counselors to join groups in their communities and to navigate conflicts, overcome social anxiety, and take on leadership roles offers a way out of that social isolation and offers opportunities to build skills that are necessary in the teams that we find in any work or volunteer setting. As those of us who are professionals in our field navigate our own challenges as a group, I am reminded of Bruce Tuckman's group stages of forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. As a profession we can remind ourselves of these developmental stages, the importance of collaboration, and the rewards of working through challenging transitions.

Members of our engaged and passionate rehabilitation counseling professional family have expressed substantial thoughtful and relevant opinions regarding our professional identity, educational program curriculum standards, licensing, credentialing, disability case management strategies, and our impact in our communities. What unites us is our disability expertise, our drive for social justice, and our work to continue to promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all levels of our society. A healthy expression of opinions and a willingness to move through conflict and transition only comes from group members who are engaged and passionate about the group and its purpose as a whole. The storming stage of group process allows us to stay flexible, current, relevant, and find focus as we navigate the path to our common goals and purpose together.

We are an active group of creative, skilled, and compassionate professionals. As we continue to use our group counseling tools of empathy, active listening, respect for all, clarifying goals, defining roles, and finding our common ground, we will continue to navigate any storms in our profession and in our communities. I am ever grateful to be a member of such a dynamic and

creative profession! Thank you to all of you in my rehabilitation counseling family for all that you are and all that you do!

Now is an exciting time to be a member of ARCA and ACA! Our dynamic field of rehabilitation counseling is continuing to grow with new and expanding educational programs, opportunities for state licensure, and rewarding career paths. Now more than ever ARCA as a membership organization needs your voice and participation. Physical distancing does not preclude social connection. During the coming year your ARCA board will continue to work to build opportunities for connections through teaching, research, and service. Working together we can continue to nourish our community during another challenging year.

Historically, there have been many outstanding ARCA leaders and members. I am humbled to have been granted this opportunity to serve. I see it as both a privilege and a great responsibility. Please join with me to work to make this exceptional era become one of positive visibility for rehabilitation counseling and the disability community.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sonia Peterson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sonia Peterson, Ph.D., CRC, LPCC
ARCA President (2021-2022)

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