Update from the Fraud, Waste and Abuse Department

This Provider Alert replaces and supersedes the earlier Provider Alert # 12 08-27-2012, and includes clarifying information on provider responsibility for verification of appropriate education and training of staff/employees.

Ensuring that Community Care members are being treated by providers and staff who have appropriate education and training is an ongoing concern of Community Care’s Fraud, Waste and Abuse Department. With recent increases in the availability of online degrees, there has also been an increase in the prevalence of “diploma mills” – entities that offer, for a fee, degrees, diplomas, certificates or other credentials that are designed to represent to others that the holder of such a document has completed a program of post-secondary education or training, typically without requiring the holder to satisfy any actual education requirements or complete relevant academic coursework. To help ensure that Community Care members receive care of the highest quality, Community Care expects providers to verify that any employee who is providing care to Community Care members is appropriately qualified, and that any degree or training relied upon by such an employee has been obtained from a legitimate college, university, or other program of study.

One means of verifying the legitimacy and quality of an individual’s education and training is to confirm that any relevant credentials (degrees, diplomas, etc.) were obtained from an accredited college or university. The U.S. Department of Education recognizes domestic accrediting bodies for the accreditation of institutions of higher education. These include, but may not be limited to, the following Regional and National accrediting agencies:

- Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges
- Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training
- Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
- Council on Occupational Education
- Distance Education and Training Council, Accrediting Commission
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- New York State Board of Regents, and the Commissioner of Education
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the Higher Learning Commission
- North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, Board of Trustees
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission of Colleges
- Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools, Accreditation Commission
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

There is no single authority in the U.S. for the recognition of foreign degrees and other qualifications obtained outside of the United States. Information on the accreditation of non-U.S. credentials may be available from a foreign country’s Ministry of Education or other relevant government agency.

Alternatively, employers, providers or individuals may seek the review, analysis and recommendations of independent credential evaluation services. These private services evaluate the comparability of foreign degrees to a U.S. degree, and may issue recommendations as to how foreign qualifications compare to similar qualifications or standards in the U.S. education system or labor market. Like accreditation, private credential evaluation is only one means of verifying the legitimacy and quality of an individual’s education and training. More information on foreign credential evaluation services and related resources can be found at the following U.S. Department of Education website:

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-visitus-forrecog.html

In addition to accrediting agencies and independent evaluation services, various licensing boards and professional associations may also offer more information on industry-accepted credentials, and may provide possible alternatives for verifying the legitimacy of a health care professional’s education and training. When attempting to verify the quality and legitimacy of staff or employee credentials, Community Care encourages providers to use their best judgment and, to the extent possible, seek information only from trusted sources.

Community Care also expects providers to verify that any degree or educational credential(s) relied upon by staff are appropriately related to the behavioral health field and meet any specific qualifications defined by Medical Assistance Bulletins, DPW/OMHSAS guidance, and/or program regulations for the specific services being delivered.