



Steven R. Stafford

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I have been asked throughout my career, “Why did you want to become a counselor?” I know many of those persons are merely being polite or making casual conversation, but I know some people are sincerely interested in what would inspire someone to pursue a profession of service to persons in need of assistance during difficult and even dire periods of their lives. I have thought about why I was drawn to counseling often and my response is my desire to help others.

I have a deep love for my work as a counselor. Like many other service-based professions, it is immensely rewarding, but also requires a significant amount of compassion to help others. I am reminded daily of my gratitude for the opportunity to assist persons in need for the last 21 years. It is hard work, but I believe it is noble work. I am proud and thankful my job is helping persons heal past wounds/traumas, navigate difficult life events, and move towards more healthy ways of thinking and behaving.

I completed my undergraduate degree in 1998. Like many young graduates – I spent the next year trying to discover my purpose and figure out, “What do I want to be...now that I have grown up?” In the Fall of 1999, I returned to Mississippi College to start my Masters of Science in Counseling Psychology. My time at Mississippi College affirmed my decision that becoming a counselor was my purpose.

Over the last 21 years the passion I have for the counseling profession has allowed me to serve not only the clients I have been blessed to work with, but also my profession. Through work I have served in community mental health, acute psychiatric inpatient facilities, residential psychiatric facilities, outpatient hospital centers, private practice settings and currently as the Behavioral Health Clinic Director for Canopy Children’s Solutions. Service to my profession has been an integral part of my career. I have served in various positions in several professional organizations. I served as Liaison to the Mississippi Board of Examiners for both The Mississippi Counseling Association and The Mississippi Licensed Professional Counselors Association. I have served as an MCA Conference Co-Chair. Within MLPCA I held many different roles and served on multiple committees including the role of President. I have previously been acknowledged as, “MLPCA Licensed Professional Counselor of the Year.” Lastly, For the past 6 years I have had the honor and pleasure of serving on the Mississippi Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors. My term on the Licensure Board ended on June 30th, 2022.

I would like to continue my mission to serve the counseling profession and am grateful to be professionally and personally in the position to seek a leadership role in the Mississippi Counseling Association as President. I have had the opportunity to work with many MCA Presidents and others in leadership roles. I understand the time, energy, and effort the role of MCA President requires. My professional services work has shown me not only the need for leaders and servers in the field, but also the barriers to entry for those new to service and leadership roles. As MCA President I will work with fellow MCA leaders and members to educate, encourage, and facilitate counseling students, counselors new to the field, and existing counselors on the importance and value of engaging in service to the profession. Service comes in many shapes and forms. I hope that together we will all find a way and a place to serve.