

LPC LICENSURE PROCESS HANDBOOK

VIRGINIA BOARD OF COUNSELING

The DHP mission is to ensure safe and competent patient care by licensing health professionals, enforcing standards of practice, and providing information to health care practitioners and the public.

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NOTE: The information contained in this handbook is subject to change at any time.
All current information can be found at <http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling/>

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Please read and become familiar with the [Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling](#) prior to submitting your application.

The board primarily communicates through email.

Please ensure that you add the board's email address (coun@dhp.virginia.gov) to your safe recipient list to ensure that you receive all email communication from board staff.

LPC SUPERVISION AND EXAMINATION LICENSURE PROCESS

You must hold the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential in order to practice professional counseling in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There are two avenues to obtain this credential:

1. Licensure by Endorsement
 - a. This process may be applicable to those who have held or hold an independent, equivalent professional counseling license in another jurisdiction.
2. Licensure by Examination
 - a. This application process is for those who have never held a professional counseling license.

A DETAILED LOOK AT HOW TO BECOME LICENSED AS A LPC IN VIRGINIA:

From start to finish, the process of becoming a LPC in Virginia takes years to complete. Several forms that you will need to complete and submit for consideration are available on the Virginia Board of Counseling website (www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling). The information provided in this document can be a valuable tool to use throughout the process.

LPC LICENSURE BY EXAMINATION

ANY PERSON PURSUING A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR (LPC) BY EXAMINATION WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

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| STEP 1. | Complete the education requirements. |
| STEP 2. | Apply for Initial Supervised Residency (Registration of Supervision) and receive Supervision Approval prior to obtaining supervised residency experience in Virginia. |
| STEP 3. | Complete supervised residency experience requirements. |
| STEP 4. | Apply for LPC Licensure by Examination. |
| STEP 5. | Take and pass the NCMHCE examination. |
| STEP 6. | Receive LPC License. |

STEP 1: EDUCATION

To become a LPC in Virginia, your degree must be either CACREP or CORE accredited **or** be a graduate degree from a program that prepares individuals to practice counseling, as defined in §54.1-3500 of the Code of Virginia, which is offered by a college or university accredited by a regional accrediting agency and which meets the following criteria:

1. Academic study with the expressed intent to prepare counselors;
2. Identifiable counselor training faculty (licensed LPC faculty) with an identifiable body of students; and,
3. Have clear authority and primary responsibility for the core and specialty area.

Foreign Degrees:

The Board currently does not have the authority to approve foreign degrees that are not offered by a regionally accredited college or university. "Regional accrediting agency" means one of the regional accreditation agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education responsible for accrediting senior postsecondary institutions.

Additionally, the regulations require you to complete 60 graduate semester hours or 90 graduate quarter hours that **must** include the following 13 core content areas:

1. **Professional counseling identity, function and ethics** -This course provides a foundation in professional counselor identity and ethical practice, including the study of the history and philosophy of the counseling profession, professional counselor function and credentialing and ethical standards for practice in the counseling profession.
2. **Theories of counseling & psychotherapy** - This course provides an overview of the basic tenets and applications of currently preferred theories of counseling and psychotherapy including the study of humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic and post-modern theoretical orientations. 3. **Counseling & psychotherapy techniques** - This course provides a didactic and experiential overview of basic techniques used in the counseling process including establishing the counseling relationship, setting treatment goals, applying listening and interviewing skills, initiating termination and referral, and recognizing parameters and limitations of the treatment process.
4. **Human growth & development** - This course provides an overview of contemporary theoretical perspectives regarding the nature of developmental needs and tasks from infancy through late adulthood, the influences of development on mental health and dysfunction and the promotion of healthy development across human life span.
5. **Group counseling and psychotherapy, theories and techniques** - This course provides a didactic and experiential overview of group counseling process and dynamics, contemporary group counseling theories, and group counseling leadership skills including group selection, group formation, group interventions and group evaluation.
6. **Career counseling and development theories and techniques** - This course provides an overview of career development and counseling including study of factors influencing career development, contemporary theories of career decision-making, career assessment and group and individual career counseling techniques.
7. **Appraisal, evaluation & diagnostic procedures** - This course introduces students to the selection, administration; scoring and interpretation of contemporary psychological assessments used by professional counselors and includes the study of formal and information assessment procedures, basic test statistics, test validity and reliability, and the use of test findings in the counseling process.
8. **Abnormal behavior and psychopathology** - This course provides students with an overview of the major categories of mental disorders including study of their etiology and progression, their prevalence and impact on individuals and society, their diagnosis according the DSM-V and the use of diagnosis in treatment planning and counseling intervention.
9. **Multicultural counseling, theories and techniques** - This course provides students with an overview of the diverse social and cultural contexts that influence counseling relationships (e.g., culture, race, ethnicity, age, gender, SES, sexual orientation) including the study of current issues and trends in a multicultural society, contemporary theories of multicultural counseling, the impact of oppression and privilege on individuals and groups and personal awareness of cultural assumptions and biases.

10. **Research** - This course provides students with an overview of the principles and processes of performing counseling research including the study of quantitative and qualitative research designs and methods, methods of statistical analysis used in research, and reading and interpreting research results.
11. **Diagnosis and treatment of addictive disorders** - This course provides students with an overview of addictive disorders including the study of contemporary theories of addictive behavior, pharmacological classification of addictive substances, assessment of addictive disorders and currently preferred models of addictions treatment.
12. **Marriage and family systems theory** - This course provides students with an overview of counseling with couples and families include the study of the rationale for family therapy intervention, the dynamics of general systems theory, the states of family life-cycle development, and contemporary theories of family therapy intervention.
13. **Supervised internship** of at least 600 hours to include 240 hours of face-to-face direct client contact.

All coursework must be a minimum of 3 semester hours or 4.0 quarter hours. One course may count for one content area only.

All coursework reviews are based on the regulations in effect for applicants when they begin their first residency. **It is the applicant's responsibility to stay aware of regulatory changes that may affect the results of the review.**

The Board does not pre-approve schools, coursework or make recommendations as to particular classes or degree programs. The Board will review your education, degree program, and coursework as part of the Initial Supervised Residency for LPC (Registration of Supervision) Application process.

STEP 2: APPLYING FOR AND GAINING SUPERVISED RESIDENCY APPROVAL

Once you meet the education requirements as outlined above, you must apply for and gain board approval of your supervised residency prior to counting hours toward licensure. Supervised residency experience in all settings obtained in Virginia, without prior written board approval, will NOT be accepted toward licensure. Lost supervision hours due to not registering a supervisor will not be the responsibility of the Board. The approval date to begin a supervised residency approval date reflects the date the credential reviewer approves the application after verifying that the application package is complete and meets all requirements. The application review process can take up to 30 days once your application is considered complete. **Supervised residency approval will not be backdated.**

Finding a Supervisor

In accordance with §54.1-3505(8), the Board of Counseling has posted a registry of persons who meet the requirements for supervision of residents. This list should only be used as a tool to assist with your search for a supervisor. Please note that the registry is updated every quarter, and license statuses may change between updates. It is your responsibility to ensure that the supervisor has an active, unrestricted license. However, if your proposed supervisor is not on the list, the proposed supervisor may still be approved if he/she meets the requirements to be a supervisor as outlined below.

Supervisor Requirements

A licensee who provides supervision for a resident in professional counseling shall:

1. Document two years of post-licensure clinical experience;
2. Have received professional training in supervision, consisting of three credit hours or 4.0 quarter hours in graduate-level coursework in supervision or at least 20 hours of continuing education in supervision offered by a provider approved under 18VAC115-20-106; and
3. Shall hold an active, unrestricted license as a professional counselor or marriage and family therapist in the jurisdiction where the supervision is being provided.

Supervisor Responsibilities

The supervisor of a resident shall assume full responsibility for the clinical activities of that resident specified within the supervisory contract for the duration of the residency. The supervisor shall complete evaluation forms to be given to the resident at the end of each 3-month period. These evaluation forms are available on the Board website. It is advisable that both the supervisor and the resident keep copies of these evaluations. Additionally, on the verification of clinical supervision form, the supervisor must report the total hours of residency and must evaluate the resident's competency in the six required competency areas. The resident should hold both forms until the resident completes the residency requirements and applies to sit for the examination. Supervision by any individual whose relationship to the resident compromises the objectivity of the supervisor is prohibited. If supervision terminates, the supervisor or the resident should submit a Termination of Supervision form (available on the Board website) to the Board.

Gaining Board Approval for Supervised Residency Experience or "Registration of Supervision"

Once you have identified a supervisor and a worksite, submit the Initial Supervised Residency for LPC Licensure(Registration of Supervision) application packet, along with the fee (in the form of a check or money order, payable to the Treasurer of Virginia), to the Board for approval. Specifically, submit the following:

- Initial Registration of Supervision application
 - Please NOTE, this application contains an ethics portion.
 - If you answered "yes" to any of the ethics questions, you must submit a statement regarding the circumstances and any court documents, employment records, etc. Please refer to Guidance Document 115-2.
 - If you answered "yes" for a criminal conviction, we must have court documentation. If the conviction is not available with the courts, you may provide a criminal history check from the Virginia State Police. Please refer to Guidance Document 115-2.
- \$65 Fee for initial supervisor (each add or change in supervisor application will require a \$30 fee)
- Education and Internship Verification form to be completed by your graduate program with an original signature and sent to the Board within your application packet.
- Official transcript
 - Do NOT send undergraduate transcripts.
 - Your transcript MUST show your master's degree conferred.
 - Your transcript must be official.
 - Faxes and photocopies will NOT be accepted.
 - Transcripts must be mailed with your application packet or received directly from the university by secured electronic methods such as eSCRIPT-SAFE or Parchment.
- Verification of your supervisor's training in clinical supervision (this is only necessary if your supervisor is not listed on the Supervisor Registry)

We strongly encourage you to verify that your packet is complete and includes all required forms. A completed application packet provides the best opportunity to avoid delays in approving your information. You should make every effort to mail this information in one complete packet to our board office for consideration.

NOTE: Original signatures are required on all forms and applications. Copies and digital signatures will not be accepted.

AFTER YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN RECEIVED:

- When your packet is received, it is date stamped and your check is processed.
- An administrative review is completed on your file to ensure it is complete.
- Within 7-10 days, you are notified of any deficiencies found in your application.
- Upon receipt of corrections and/or additional required documentation your file then receives another administrative review. This process continues until it appears that your file is complete.
- When your file appears to be complete, it is reviewed for approval to begin supervision. Please allow 30 days, after receipt of your complete application packet, for approval of initial supervision.
- If approved for supervision, you and your supervisor will be emailed an approval letter with an effective and expiration date to begin counting hours toward licensure. At this point, you will be considered a "Resident in Counseling" and may begin supervision!

NOTE: Incomplete applications will be kept active for one year from the date of payment. If your application is not completed in the one year timeframe, you will be required to re-apply by submitting a new application. (Applications that were deemed administratively complete and reviewed by the Credential Reviewer are **not** considered incomplete.)

If your application is denied, you will be given 60 days to respond to the Board. You can provide additional evidence that you meet the requirements or you may request an Informal Conference with the Board. Requesting an Informal Conference is a lengthy process and can take from several months to a year to schedule. If after 60 days, you have not provided additional information or requested an Informal Conference your application will expire and you will need to re-apply to be considered further.

IMPORTANT SUPERVISION NOTICES! Once supervision is approved, your supervisor is responsible for your counseling activities at the approved supervision location.

Residents may not call themselves professional counselors, directly bill for services rendered, or in any way represent themselves as independent, autonomous practitioners or professional counselors. During the residency, residents shall use their names and the initials of their degree, and the title "Resident in Counseling" in all written communications. Clients shall be informed in writing of the resident's status and the supervisor's name, professional address, and phone number.

Residents shall not engage in practice under supervision in any areas for which they have not had appropriate education.

Adding or Changing Registration Supervision of your Residency:

A new application, documentation, and fee must be submitted for approval for any change in supervision (i.e. a worksite add/change or supervisor add/change). There is no fee for worksite only changes; however, if you have a change to your supervisor, you will be required to submit a \$30 application fee. If your residency was previously approved, duplicate copies of your education information is not required. The requested change still requires a formal application review that can take 15 days.

NOTE: Original signatures are required on all forms and applications. Copies and digital signatures will not be accepted.

Termination of Supervision:

If supervision terminates, you or your supervisor should submit a Termination of Supervision form (which can be found on the Board website) to the Board. Your supervisor should also complete the last Quarterly Evaluation and the Verification of Clinical Supervision form at the end of your experience. You, the resident, must keep this form in your records until you are ready to apply to sit for the examination toward licensure. This Verification of Clinical Supervision and Quarterly Evaluation forms are necessary pieces of your application and serves as documentation of your supervision and residency hours.

Step 3: Complete the Supervised Residency Requirements

Once the Board approves your supervision, you have achieved the status of “Resident in Counseling” and you can count your supervised residency experience hours towards licensure. To achieve licensure, you must meet all of the residency requirements.

Residency Requirements:

1. A 3,400 hour supervised residency in counseling practice with various populations, clinical problems and theoretical approaches in the following areas:
 - Assessment and diagnosis using psychotherapy techniques
 - Appraisal, evaluation, and diagnostic procedures
 - Treatment planning and implementation
 - Case management and record keeping
 - Professional counselor identity and function
 - Professional ethics and standard of practice
2. 2,000 hours of face-to-face client contact must be documented within this 3,400 hour residency. The remaining 1,400 hours may be spent in the performance of ancillary counseling services. Graduate internship hours in **excess** of 600 hours, may count for up to an additional 300 hours towards the total residency requirements if the internship was earned after the completion of 30 graduate semester hours.
3. A minimum of 200 hours of supervisory sessions, occurring at a minimum of 1 hour and a maximum of 4 hours of supervision per 40 hours of work experience, during the period of the residency. Up to 20 hours of the supervision received during the supervised internship may be counted toward the 200 hours of in-person supervision if the supervision was provided by a LPC.
4. You must complete your residency in no less than 21 months and no more than four years. Residents who began their residency before August 24, 2016 must complete the residency by August 24, 2020. If you do not complete your residency after four years, you must submit evidence to the board showing why the supervised experience should be allowed to continue prior to August 24, 2020 and not before June 1, 2020.

Group supervision hours are equivalent to individual supervision hours, however, only half of the 200 required hours may be obtained in group supervision. 100 hours of the 200 required hours must be obtained under board-approved supervision with a Licensed Professional Counselor.

NOTE: Supervision that is not concurrent with a residency will not be accepted, nor will residency hours be accrued in the absence of approved supervision.

What are clinical counseling services? The Board's definition means activities such as assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and treatment implementation.

What is ancillary counseling services? It is the activities such as case management, recordkeeping, referral, and coordination of services. (Supervision sessions with your supervisor can be considered toward ancillary counseling services.)

What is in-person supervision? It is the supervision between supervisor and resident in the consultation and review of clinical counseling services provided by a resident. In-person supervision may include the use of secured technology that maintains client confidentiality and provides real-time, visual contact between the supervisor and the resident.

What is group supervision? The Board's definition means the process of clinical supervision of no more than six **persons** in a group setting provided by a qualified supervisor.

Out-of-State Supervision: Supervision completed in another jurisdiction can possibly count toward licensure if it meets the requirements outlined in Virginia's Regulations. The board will not approve this supervision until you have completed your supervised experience and apply for to sit for the examination for licensure. You must have your past supervisor(s) complete Virginia's Verification of Clinical Supervision form. You should keep this information until you are ready to apply to sit for the examination toward licensure. Additionally, you will be required to submit your supervisor's license verification in order to verify that they meet the supervisor requirements.

Step 4: Submit Application for Licensure by Examination

Once residency has been completed, submit the required application and required documentation with your check or money order, payable to the Treasurer of Virginia, in the amount of \$175 for the application fee. Once this application is approved, you may sit for the examination and obtain licensure. Specifically, at this stage, submit the following:

- Application form by examination which must be signed and notarized (Copies are not accepted)
- \$175.00 fee (check or money order)
- Verification of Clinical Supervision form to be submitted by each of your Board approved supervisors. This form is available on our website and must be sent with original signatures.
- Quarterly Evaluations which should have been completed by your supervisors during your residency must be submitted with original signatures.
- National Practitioners Data Bank (NPDB) query is required for every licensure application.
- Supervision Summary Form.

Residents providing clinical counseling services in a non-exempt setting must remain under Board approved supervision until licensed. This means that you will still need to meet with your Board approved supervisor a minimum of one time per 40 hours of work.

Step 5. Take and Pass the Examination

To become licensed by the Board you must pass the National Clinical Mental Health Counselors Examination (NCMHCE), unless you are applying for licensure by endorsement.

After your application is received, reviewed, and approved by the Virginia Board of Counseling, you will be notified that you are approved to sit for the exam. You will then register with the testing agency by submitting the necessary form and your payment of \$275.00 for the examination fee. You will work directly with the testing agency until you pass the examination. Your scores will be forwarded to the Board office in about four to six weeks following the examination. Upon receipt of a passing score on the examination, we will email you once your application is reviewed for the final time and you are licensed. The email contains helpful information regarding your license. Staff will also mail your paper license and certificate to you within 30 days at the address on record with the board. Residents in Counseling must remain under supervision until licensed. If the applicant fails the exam, he/she must remain under supervision until he/she is licensed.

You have two years from the exam approval date to pass the NCMHCE. If you do not meet this requirement, you will be required to file a completely new application for examination toward licensure (along with applicable fees) and meet the current requirements if you wish to apply for LPC licensure. If approved by the Board for the second time, you will have another two years to pass the exam. If you do not pass the exam within the additional two year period, a new application will not be accepted.

If you fail the exam within your two year period, you will need to contact NBCC/CCE directly to set up a new exam date. You must wait three (3) months between each test attempt.

If you were approved to sit for the exam prior to August 24, 2016, you will have until August 24, 2018 to pass the exam. If you do not meet this requirement, you will be required to file a completely new application for licensure (along with applicable fees) and meet the current requirements if you wish to apply for LPC licensure.

NOTE: The Regulations do not prohibit you from taking the NCMHCE prior to completing your residency; however, you will not be taking the exam for Virginia and your scores will not be transferred to the Virginia Board after you pass. You will need to contact NBCC for their requirements to sit for the examination. If you pass the exam prior to receiving Board approval, you will need to contact NBCC to have your scores transferred to the Virginia Board of Counseling after you have submitted the LPC by Examination application packet.

SPECIAL EXAMINATION ACCOMODATIONS

All requests for special accommodations must be reviewed and approved by the Virginia Board of Counseling. A written request with a doctor's note should be submitted with your application for licensure by examination.

LPC ENDORSEMENT LICENSURE PROCESS

Virginia does not have reciprocity with any state. All applicants are required to complete the application process. You may apply at any time. It is not required that you have a Virginia address in order to apply for licensure.

PREREQUISITES FOR APPLYING BY ENDORSEMENT FOR A VIRGINIA LPC CREDENTIAL:

To apply for licensure by endorsement, you must have or have held an independent equivalent professional counselor license in another U. S. jurisdiction and meet one of the following:

1. Have 24 of the last 60 months of post-licensure active practice with an independent clinical counseling licensed.
 - a. Provide evidence of post-licensure clinical practice in counseling for 24 of the last 60 months immediately preceding your application in Virginia.
 - i. Clinical practice shall mean the rendering of direct clinical counseling services or clinical supervision of counseling services.
 - b. Documentation of education and supervised experience that met the requirements of the jurisdiction in which you were initially licensed as verified by an official transcript and a certified copy of the original application materials
2. If you **do not** have 24 of the last 60 months of post-licensure active practice with an independent clinical counseling license, your education and supervision experience must be consistent with those required by Virginia Code and Regulations. Please refer to the education and residency requirements outlined previously in the handbook.

APPLYING FOR LPC BY ENDORSEMENT:

To apply for LPC by Endorsement, you must submit the following to the Virginia Board of Counseling:

1. A completed application;
2. \$175 application processing fee;
3. Verification of all mental health or health professional licenses, certificates or registration ever held in any other jurisdiction.
 - In order to qualify for endorsement, you must have no unresolved action against a license or certificate. The board will consider history of disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis.
4. Official transcript;
5. Documentation of having completed education and supervision experience;
6. Verification of a passing score on an examination required for counseling licensure in the jurisdiction in which licensure was initially obtained;
7. Verification of post-licensure clinical active practice (if applicable);
8. Certified copy of licensure application from the jurisdiction where you were originally licensed (if applicable);
9. Attest to having read and understood the regulations and laws governing the practice of professional counseling in Virginia; and
10. National Practitioners Data Bank (NPDB) query is required for every licensure application.

GROUND TO DENY AN APPLICATION:

Grounds to deny a license may be found in Regulation 18VAC115-20-140 of the board's Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling. If grounds exist to deny an application for licensure, your application will not be approved by board staff, and you will be so notified and offered an opportunity to meet with an Special Conference Committee of the board to determine if the license should be denied, issued, or issued conditionally.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

THE APPLICATION/REGISTRATION PROCESS IS NOT A SHORT PROCESS. THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TAKES VARIES FOR EVERY APPLICANT. THE MORE COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION IS UPON RECEIPT, THE SMOOTHER THE PROCESS WILL GO. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT TO FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS AND COMPLETE ALL FORMS IN THEIR ENTIRETY.

ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE, NON-TRANSFERABLE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Incomplete applications/registrations and fees are valid for one (1) year from the date of receipt. If your application/registration is not complete within one (1) year, a new application/registration and fee will be required.