

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST 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.

LMFT SUPERVISION AND EXAMINATION LICENSURE PROCESS

You must hold the Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) credential in order to practice marriage and family 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 hold or have held have a marriage and family therapy license in another jurisdiction.
2. Licensure by Examination
 - a. This application process is for those who have never held a marriage and family therapy license in another jurisdiction or for those who have held a marriage and family therapy license in another jurisdiction but cannot meet the requirements for licensure by endorsement.

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

From start to finish, the process of becoming an LMFT in Virginia takes years to complete. There are several forms that you will need to complete and submit for consideration that 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.

LMFT LICENSURE BY EXAMINATION

ANY PERSON PURSUING A LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY (LMFT) BY EXAMINATION WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

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| STEP 1. | Complete the education requirements. |
| STEP 2. | <u>Apply</u> for and receive Supervision Approval prior to obtaining supervision experience. Referred to as <i>Initial Registration of Supervision</i> . |
| STEP 3. | Complete supervision requirements. |
| STEP 4. | <u>Apply</u> for LMFT Licensure by Examination. |
| STEP 5. | Take and pass the examination. |
| STEP 6. | Receive LMFT License. |

STEP 1: EDUCATION.

Degree/Program Requirements

To become an LMFT in Virginia, the regulations require you complete 60 graduate hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate study in a program that prepares individuals to practice marriage and family therapy from a college or university that is regionally accredited and also meets the following criteria:

1. There must be a sequence of academic study with the expressed intent to prepare students to practice marriage and family therapy as documented by the institution;
2. There must be an identifiable marriage and family therapy training faculty and an identifiable body of students who complete that sequence of academic study; and,
3. The academic unit must have clear authority and primary responsibility for the core and specialty areas.

Programs that are approved by CACREP as programs in marriage and family counseling/therapy or by COAMFTE are recognized as meeting the program/degree requirements.

Coursework Requirements

The 60 graduate hours or 90 quarter hours **must** include 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours in:

1. **Marriage and family studies** (marital and family development; family systems theory) These courses provide an overview of marriage and family systems theories and techniques. Courses in this area will enable students to conceptualize and distinguish the critical theories and practice in the profession of marriage and family therapy. Courses will be related conceptually to clinical concerns; and,
2. **Marriage and family therapy** (systemic therapeutic interventions and application of major theoretical approaches) These courses address contemporary issues, which include but are not limited to gender, violence, addictions and abuse in the treatment of individuals, couples and families from a relational/systemic perspective and application of major theoretical approaches.

Additionally, the 60 graduate hours or 90 quarter hours must include 3 semester hours or 4 quarter hours in each of the following core areas:

1. **Human growth and development across the lifespan** - 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.
2. **Abnormal behaviors** - 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 to the DSM-V and the use of diagnosis in treatment planning and counseling intervention.
3. **Diagnosis and treatment of addictive behaviors** - This course provides students with an overview of addictive disorders including the study of contemporary theories of addictive behavior, pharmacological classification and addictive substances, assessment of addictive disorders and currently preferred models of addictions treatment.
4. **Multicultural counseling** - 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 individual and groups and personal awareness of cultural assumptions and biases.

5. **Professional identity 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.
6. **Research (research methods; quantitative methods; statistics)** - 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.
7. **Assessment and treatment (appraisal, assessment and diagnostic procedures)** - This course introduces students to the selection, administration; scoring and interpretation of contemporary psychological assessments used by professional counselor and includes the study of formal and information assessment procedures, basic test statistics, test validity and reliability, and the use of test finding in the counseling process.
8. **Supervised internship** of at least 600 hours to include:
 - a. 240 hours of direct client contact of which 200 hours shall be with couples and families.
 - b. *Only internship hours earned after completion of 30 graduate semester hours may be counted towards residency hours.*

Education Requirements if hold another license

If you hold a current, unrestricted license as a professional counselor, clinical psychologist, or clinical social worker, the board may accept evidence of successful completion of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate study, including a minimum of 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours completed in marriage and family studies (marital and family development; family systems theory) and 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours completed in marriage and family therapy (systemic therapeutic interventions and application of major theoretical approaches).

All coursework reviews are based on the regulations in effect for applicants when they are approved to begin their first supervision. **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. Your education, degree program and coursework will be reviewed as part of the Initial 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 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. Supervised residency approval dates are determined by the date of the review after a complete package has been received. **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 person who provides supervision for a resident in marriage and family therapy shall:

1. Hold an active, unrestricted license as a marriage and family therapist or professional counselor *in the jurisdiction where supervision is being provided*;
2. Document two years of post-licensure marriage and family therapy experience;
3. Have received professional training in supervision, consisting of 3 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.

At least one-half of the 200 hours of supervision shall be rendered by a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Supervisors who are clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, or psychiatrists and have been approved to provide supervision may continue to do so until August 24, 2017.

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, the supervisor shall report the total hours of residency and shall evaluate the applicant's competency to the Board. Supervision by any individual whose relationship to the resident compromises the objectivity of the supervisor is prohibited.

Gaining Board Approval for Supervised Residency or "Registering Supervision"

Once you have identified a supervisor and a location, submit the Registration of Supervision application, along with the fee (in the form of a check or money order, payable to the Treasurer of Virginia), to the Board for approval. The Registration packet and forms are available on the Board of Counseling website. Specifically, a complete registration packet will include the following:

- Initial Registration of Supervision application (supervisory contract)
 - 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.

- 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.
- Education and Internship Verification form to be completed by your graduate program.
- Official transcript with conferral date for your graduate degree.
- Verification of your supervisor’s training in clinical supervision (this is only necessary if the supervisor has not been approved as a supervisor since July 1, 2013)
- \$65 Registration Fee.

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 business 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 business days for approval of initial supervision.
- If approved for supervision, you and your supervisor will be emailed an approval letter with an effective date to begin counting hours toward licensure. At this point, you will be considered a Resident in Marriage and Family Therapy and may begin supervision!

We strongly encourage you 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: 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 and fee.

IMPORTANT SUPERVISION NOTICES!

Residents may not call themselves marriage and family therapists, directly bill for services rendered, or in any way represent themselves as independent, autonomous practitioners or marriage and family therapists. During the residency, residents may use their names and the initials of their degree, and the title "Resident in Marriage and Family Therapy". 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.

The residency shall be completed in not less than 21 months or more than 4 years. Residents who began a residency before August 24, 2016 shall complete the residency by August 24, 2020. An individual who does not complete the residency after 4 years shall submit evidence to the board showing why the supervised experience should be allowed to continue.

Adding or Changing Registration Supervision:

A new application, documentation, and fee must be submitted for approval for any change in supervision (i.e. a location add/change or supervisor add/change). Please note that a change to already approved supervision (currently active) does not require that your practicum or education information is re-reviewed. However, the requested change still requires a formal review that can take 15 business days.

Termination of Supervision:

If supervision terminates, you should submit a Termination of Supervision form (which can be found on the Board website) to the Board. Your supervisor should also complete the Verification of Clinical Supervision form at the end of your experience. You, the supervisee, must keep this form in your records until you are ready to apply for licensure. This Verification of Clinical Supervision form is a necessary piece of your application and serves as documentation of your supervision hours.

Step 3: Complete the Supervised Residency Requirements

Once the Board approves your supervision, you have achieved the status of Resident in Marriage and Family Therapy 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 the role of marriage and family therapist to include:
 - a. 200 hours of in-person supervision with the supervisor in the consultation and review of marriage and family services provided by the resident.
 - i. In-person may also include the use of technology that maintains client confidentiality and provides real-time, visual contact between the supervisor and the resident.
 - ii. At least half of the 200 hours of supervision shall be rendered by a LMFT.
 - b. Residents shall receive a minimum of one hour and a maximum of 4 hours of supervision for every 40 hours of supervised work experience.
 - c. No more than 100 hours of the supervision may be acquired through group.
 - i. Group consists of no more than 6 residents.
 - ii. One hour of group supervision is equivalent to one hour of individual supervision.
2. The residency shall include documentation of at least 2,000 hours of clinical marriage and family services
 - a. 1,000 hours of the 2,000 hours shall be face-to-face client contact with couples or families, or both.
 - b. The remaining hours may be spent in the performance of ancillary counseling services.
 - c. For applicants who hold current, unrestricted licensure as a professional counselor, clinical psychologist, or clinical social worker, the remaining hours may be waived.
3. The residency shall consist of practice in the core education areas.
4. The residency shall begin after the completion of a master's degree in marriage and family therapy or a related discipline.

5. A graduate-level internship in excess of 600 hours that was approved as part of the education requirements may count for up to an additional 300 hours towards the requirements of a residency.

What are clinical marriage and family services services? The Board's definition means activities such as assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and treatment implementation for couples and families.

What is face-to-face supervision? The Board's definition means the in-person delivery of clinical marriage and family services for a client.

Out-of-State Supervision: Residency hours that are approved by the licensing board in another United States jurisdiction and meet the requirements of Virginia will be accepted.

Step 4: Submit Application for Licensure by Examination

Once residency has been completed, submit all required application materials and 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. The application packet and forms are available on our website. Specifically, at this stage, submit the following:

- Application for Licensure by Examination
- \$175.00 fee (check or money order)
- Verification of Internship towards Residency Form
- Verification of Supervision form to be submitted by each of your Board approved supervisors.
- Quarterly Evaluations which should have been completed by your supervisors during your residency.
- A Current report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB).

Step 5. Take and Pass the Examination

Once your licensure application is approved, you will receive information on registering for the national examination through Professional Examination Service. You will then register with the testing agency by submitting the necessary form and your payment 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 4 weeks following the examination. Licensure will be issued upon receipt of a passing score.

The examination is waived for an applicant who holds a current and unrestricted license as a professional counselor issued by the Board.

You have two years from the exam approval date to pass the examination. If you have not passed the examination within 2 years from the date in initial approval:

1. The initial approval to sit for the examination becomes invalid; and
2. The applicant shall file a new application with the board, meet the requirements in effect at that time, and provide evidence of why the Board should approve the reapplication for examination.

If the examination is not passed within the additional 2-year period, a new application will not be accepted.

SPECIAL EXAMINATION ACCOMODATIONS

All requests for special accommodations must be reviewed and approved by the Virginia Board of Counseling. A written request with supporting documentation should be submitted with your application for licensure by examination.

EXAMINEES WITH DISABILITIES: Examination administration locations are selected with effective access for candidates with physical disabilities. Candidates requiring special assistance, such as readers or recorders, must request prior permission for the admittance of an assisting individual.

LMFT 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 LMFT CREDENTIAL:

To apply for licensure by endorsement, you must have or have held a marriage and family license in another U. S. jurisdiction and meet one of the following:

1. Educational and supervision experience requirements comparable to those required for persons applying for licensure in Virginia by examination.
2. If you do not have educational and supervision experience credentials consistent with those required by Virginia Code and Regulations, you must provide:
 - a. 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; and
 - b. Evidence of clinical practice as a marriage and family therapist for 24 of the last 60 months immediately preceding your application in Virginia.
 - i. Clinical practice shall mean the rendering of direct clinical services in marriage and family or clinical supervision of services in marriage and family.

NOTE: The Board may accept verification from the credentials registry of the American Association of State Counseling Boards or any other board-recognized entity, in lieu of transcripts verifying education and documentation verifying supervised experience.

APPLYING FOR LMFT BY ENDORSEMENT:

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

1. A completed application;
2. The application processing fee and initial licensure fee of \$175;
3. Verification of all mental health or health professional licenses or certificates 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. Documentation of having completed education and supervision experience;

5. Verification of a passing score on an examination required for marriage and family licensure in the jurisdiction in which licensure was initially obtained; and
6. An affidavit of having read and understood the regulations and laws governing the practice of marriage and family therapy in Virginia.

GROUND TO DENY AN APPLICATION:

Grounds to deny a license may be found in Regulation 18VAC115-50-110 of the board's Regulations Governing the Practice of Marriage and Family Therapy. 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

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