



Board of Behavioral Sciences

Memo

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To: Board Members **Date:** August 9, 2023

From: Steve Sodergren
Executive Officer

Subject: Presentation By Lois Paff Bergen Regarding the AMFTRB National Examination

During the November 2022 meeting the Board discussed the possible use of the Association of Marital and Family Therapist Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) National Examination for California licensure. The Board decided to decline use of AMFTRB clinical exam for California licensure and directed staff to continue working with OPES to address all concerns brought up in closed and open meeting sessions. Board staff have invited Lois Paff Bergen, Executive Director of AMFTRB, to make a presentation regarding the AMFTRB Clinical Examination. (Attachment A)

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) has submitted a letter to the Board requesting the Board to conduct a discussion on the adoption of the AMFTRB Clinical Examination for licensure. (Attachment B)

The intent of this presentation is to provide the Board members with additional information that will assist in deciding, during a future Board meeting, as to whether the Board should utilize the AMFTRB Clinical Examination for licensure. Board staff will continue to work with DCA's Office of Professional Examination (OPES) and AMFTRB to address the concerns raised during the November 2022 meeting and will provide additional information during future Board meetings.

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MFT NATIONAL EXAMINATION

Presentation for California Board of Behavioral Sciences

August 2023

Lois Paff Bergen, PhD, LMFT Executive Director



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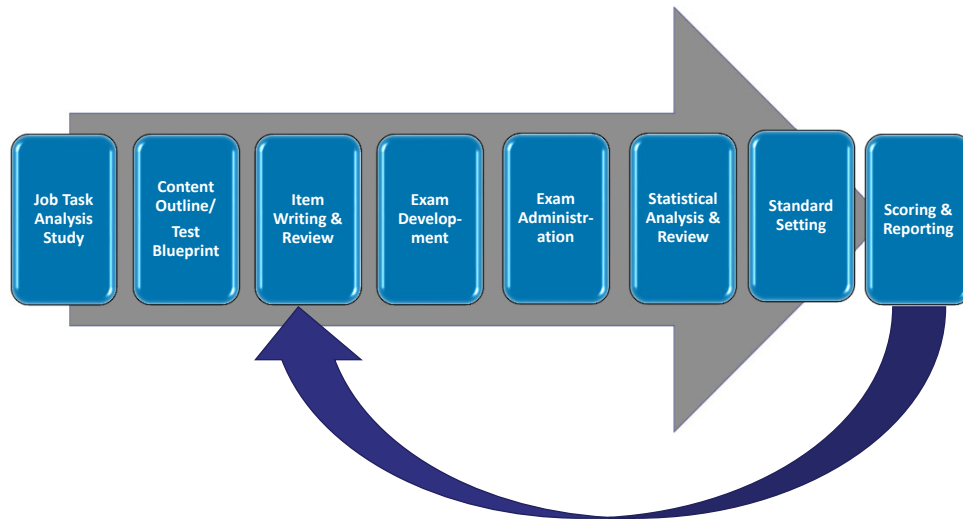
FOUR TOPICS

- MFT National Examination Development Process
- Demographic Data Requested
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility
- Alternative Pathways to Licensure than Multiple Choice Examinations



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Exam Development Process



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Demographic Data Requested

1. HAVE YOU TAKEN THIS EXAMINATION BEFORE
2. IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS HOW MANY TIMES YOU HAVE TAKEN THIS EXAMINATION
3. WHAT IS THE TIME INTERVAL BETWEEN THE LAST TIME AND THE CURRENT EXAM YOU ARE APPLYING FOR
4. DEGREE YOU EARNED THAT WAS ACCEPTED TO MEET YOUR STATE'S EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSURE
5. WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO TAKE THE MFT NATIONAL EXAMINATION
6. TIME SINCE RECEIVING YOUR DEGREE THAT YOU HAVE SPENT PROVIDING MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY
7. CURRENT POST DEGREE PRACTICE SETTING
8. HOLD AN ADDITIONAL DEGREE
9. IS ENGLISH YOUR PRIMARY LANGUAGE
10. MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY



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Demographic Data Requested cont.

11. HAVE YOU RECEIVED TRAINING IN TELETHERAPY
12. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM TYPE
13. INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE/TRAINING HOURS TYPE
14. INTERNSHIP INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISION TYPE
15. INTERNSHIP GROUP SUPERVISION TYPE
16. GENDER
17. AGE RANGE
18. ETHNICITY/RACE
19. IS ENGLISH YOUR FIRST LANGUAGE
20. ARE YOU REQUESTING EXTRA TIME AS AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL) SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS
21. WERE ALL THE ACADEMIC COURSES REQUIRED FOR YOUR DEGREE COMPLETED ONLINE
22. STATE/PROVINCE/JURISDICTION OF RESIDENCE
23. MEDIA OF EXAMINATION



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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA) Efforts

- Revised application questions/optional demographic questions
- Training SME and PTC staff
- Recruiting diverse SME panels
- Running differential item functioning (DIF) analyses on examination items
- Reviewing alternatives to exams to remove barriers to licensure
- Provide quarterly training program reports to jurisdictions
- Discussing workshops to help states use data



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ADA Accommodations Frequent Requests

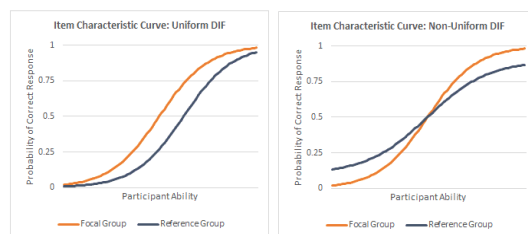
- Extra time
- Large text printed test booklet
- Zoom text on computer
- Reader
- Scribe
- Test separately
- Frequent breaks



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Differential Item Functioning (DIF)

- Definition
 - A test item is labeled with “DIF” when examinees with equal ability, but from different groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity), have an unequal probability of answering an item correctly.
- Types of DIF
 - Uniform DIF: item is systematically more difficult for members of one group.
 - Non-Uniform DIF: shift in item difficulty is not consistent across the ability continuum.



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Important Notes

- Although the presence of DIF is a signal that candidates from different subgroups respond to the item differently, it does not guarantee that the item is unfair.
- Trivial effects could be statistically significant when the DIF test is based on a large sample size.
- Follow-up bias analyses and content review of the items that displayed DIF is necessary to identify the source of the bias if the bias does exist.



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Alternative Pathways to Licensure rather than Multiple Choice Examinations

Are there other ways than a multiple-choice exam to show competence which protect the public?

Goals:

- Enhance consumer protection
- Increase work force
- Increase equity
- Board oversight not training institutes, but perhaps in collaboration with them



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Potential Alternative Pathways

- Degree Diploma
- Experiential
- Supervised Practice
- Performance Task Assessments
- MFT National Examination
- California Examination
- Work continues evaluating & developing different item types
- AI



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Discussion

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**CONNECT
ENRICH
ACHIEVE**

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July 26, 2023

Christopher C. Jones, Chair
Board of Behavioral Sciences
1625 N Market Blvd S-200
Sacramento, CA 95834

RE: Request for Discussion of Adoption of the National Exam

Dear Chairperson Jones and Board:

On behalf of the 35,000 members of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists ("CAMFT"), we are writing to ask that the Board of Behavioral Sciences ("BBS") put on its agenda for discussion, the adoption of the National Exam as administered by the Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Board ("AMFTRB").

CAMFT Advocating for National Exam Adoption

The National Exam administered by AMFTRB serves as a professional licensure tool for those seeking to become marriage and family therapists. California is currently the only state of fifty that has its own state exam and has not adopted the National Exam. CAMFT's Board of Directors has voted in favor of supporting the adoption of AMFTRB's National Exam in hopes of relieving some of the struggles and limitations the MFTs of California are currently facing.

CAMFT has been assessing this change for many years, with numerous Board of Directors contributing to the analysis and discussion. In addition, CAMFT has assessed the memberships' desire for license portability as well as feedback on switching to the National Exam. In CAMFT's most recent 2023 survey, respondents indicated that:

- 97% expressed a desire for CAMFT to pursue license portability.
- 66% expressed a desire to be licensed in a state other than California; and,
- 89% expressed a desire for CAMFT to advocate for a National Exam.

And, in June 2023, the CAMFT Board voted to pursue and advocate for California to transition to the National Exam as a priority.

Necessity of National Exam

Here are a few of the reasons that CAMFT has moved in the direction of advocating for a change to the National Exam:

1. **License Portability for CA MFTs:** The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT) is working closely with CAMFT as we navigate license portability for California MFTs and the barriers that California MFTs face. Common challenges we have seen so far:
 - *State Hesitation with California Exam:* The goal of the National Exam is to ease the process of obtaining multiple state licensures. The National Exam allows MFTs to have standardized qualifications for out of state applicants. Since California has its own state exam, our licensure requirements may differ from those of other states. This has led to challenging conversations with other states on exemptions for California-licensed MFTs. CAMFT has specifically been told of other states' hesitation on working with California due to the use of the California examination. While CAMFT believes AAMFT/CAMFT can overcome this hurdle with some states, the understanding that California is moving towards a National Exam is likely to result in easier transition for states hesitant to have one law for 48 other states, and an exemption for California.
 - *Telehealth Expansion:* As telehealth has/is becoming increasingly utilized, it is providing increased opportunities for therapists to expand their practice, assist in the access to care crisis, and allow for greater flexibility for provider and patient. However, California licensees are a disadvantage when seeking licensure in other states due to having not taken the National Exam.
 - *Increased cost and hurdles for MFTs:* Obtaining licenses in different jurisdictions can usually come along with the requirements for additional exams, exam fees and supervised practice hours. These requirements and the application processing can be very time consuming and can result in potential delays of continuity of care, putting a hindrance on both MFTs and their patients in their care.
2. **Federal Advocacy:** On a federal level, CAMFT has actively pushed for special considerations due to the absence of the National Exam when advocating on various federal level job specifications. Although CAMFT has been able to achieve some success, it has always required a significant amount of financial and human effort to ensure that the language of the California examination requirements is included and recognized. CAMFT believes that a change to the National Exam can only help in the advocacy efforts for MFT recognition, especially for California MFTs.

Concerns Regarding Racial Bias in Exams

CAMFT recognizes and appreciates the concerns raised regarding the racial biases observed in connection with the Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) exam. CAMFT also supports assessment and analysis of any bias (racial or otherwise) within any standardized exam taken by those regulated by the BBS. With careful consideration of this issue, we still believe movement forward towards the transition to the National Exam would be a critical step for the MFTs of California and will open an array of job opportunities for our clinical professionals. While it is critical to acknowledge the potential biases within the exam, which may cause unintentional disadvantages to certain candidates; it is also important to note that as this assessment is underway, we need to put California MFTs in the best position possible to succeed, find job security and ensure timely access to the mental health consumer. Adopting the National Exam would align California with national standards, eliminate inconsistencies, exhibit our

desire for fairness and inclusion and ensure the most qualified practitioners are providing mental health services to those in need.

In conclusion, CAMFT requests that the BBS agendaize and prioritize a discussion about transitioning to the National Exam for Marriage and Family Therapists. Thank you for your attention to this very important matter and we are here to provide any further assistance or information you may need.

Sincerely,



Joy Alafia, MBA, CAE
Executive Director



Catherine L. Atkins, J.D.
Deputy Executive Director