LPCC Scope of Practice – Treatment of Couples and Families

The scope of practice for Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs) is set forth by California Business and Professions Code section 4999.20 and Title 16, California Code of Regulations, Section 1820.5, both of which are available in the Board’s Statutes and Regulations handbook. For specific legal text, please refer to those code sections.

LPCCs are not permitted to assess or treat couples or families unless the LPCC has completed all of the required experience and coursework on this subject as specified in California Business and Professions Code section 4999.20:

1. Six (6) semester units or nine (9) quarter units specifically focused on the theory and application of marriage and family therapy OR a named specialization or emphasis area on the qualifying degree in marriage and family therapy; marital and family therapy; marriage, family, and child counseling; or couple and family therapy.

   **AND**

2. No less than 500 hours of documented supervised experience working directly with couples, families, or children.

   **AND**

3. A minimum of six (6) hours of continuing education specific to marriage and family therapy, completed in each license renewal cycle.

Title 16, California Code of Regulations section 1820.5 sets forth exemptions to the above requirements in order to allow individuals who need to gain the 500 hours of experience treating couples and families to do so without violating scope of practice limitations, as follows:

- **A Professional Clinical Counselor Intern** may gain experience with couples and families if the experience is obtained under the supervision of a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, or a LPCC who has already met the scope of practice qualifications to see couples and families.

- **An already licensed LPCC** may gain experience to treat couples and families if the experience is obtained under the supervision of a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, or a LPCC who has already met the scope of practice qualifications to see couples and families AND provided the LPCC gaining experience has completed all of the coursework requirements as described in #1 and #3 above.

- **A Professional Clinical Counselor Student/Trainee** may treat couples and families as part of their supervised practicum experience, but may not count that experience toward the 500 hours required to treat couples and families.

At this time, the Board does not verify qualifications, nor track who has met the requirements. However, the Board is working on regulations that would help to clarify the requirements, as well as better define the Board’s role in reviewing qualifications. If you would like updates on this issue as well as other Board activity, please sign up for the Board’s email subscriber’s list.

In the meantime, we recommend that you maintain records regarding your qualifications such as transcripts, course descriptions, supervised hours, etc. You may also want to obtain advice from the California Association for LPCCs.

Revised 05/2014