Continuing Education

Hours Required
Thirty-six hours of continuing education (CE) are required for each two-year renewal period (Business and Professions Code sections (BPC) 4980.54, 4996.22 and 4999.76; California Code of Regulations section (CCR) 1887.3); however:

- Initial licensees are required to complete only 18 hours of CE for their first license renewal. Your license is termed an "initial license" when it has been issued to you for the first time and you have not yet renewed it.
- Individuals who have been placed on inactive status, retired status or who were granted an exception by the Board, are not required to complete CE for license renewal.

The Board will grant exceptions if, during your previous renewal period:
  - you resided in another country for at least one year;
  - you were absent from California due to military service for at least one year; or

The Board may grant a reasonable accommodation if, for at least one year during your previous license renewal period, you or an immediate family member, including a domestic partner, for whom you are the primary caregiver, had a verified physical or mental disability or medical condition.

For information on obtaining an exception, please access the Board’s Web site (www.bbs.ca.gov) or contact the Board office at (916) 574-7830.

Inactive License
A licensee may request that his or her license be placed on inactive status by making a written request to the Board or by checking the inactive box on the renewal application (BPC sections 4984.8, 4997, and 4999.112).

Reactivation of Inactive License
To reactivate an inactive license, the licensee must complete the required 36 CE hours and submit the additional fees and a statement certifying the completion of CE to the Board. If the licensee has less than a year until the reactivated license expires, the licensee must complete 18 CE hours for the next active license renewal after reactivation.

If, at the time of reactivation, the licensee has more than one year until the reactivated license expires, the licensee must complete 36 CE hours for the next active license renewal after reactivation.

Courses may be credited to only one renewal period, and cannot be counted twice.

Retired License
A licensee may request that his or her license be placed on retired status by submitting an application and the required fee to the Board (BPC sections 4984.41, 4997.1 and 4999.113).

Reactivation of Retired License
To reactivate a retired license, you must complete the following continuing education:

- If your retired license was issued less than one year from the date you submit your reactivation request, you must complete 18 CE hours.
- If your retired license was issued one or more years from the date you submit your reactivation request, you must complete 36 CE hours.

Mandatory Courses
- Law & Ethics (each renewal cycle)
  All licensees are required to complete at least six hours of CE in the area of Law and Ethics as a condition of each renewal. The six hours shall be considered part of the 36 hour CE requirement (CCR section 1887.3).
- HIV/AIDS (one time only)
  All licensees are required to complete a course which is at least seven hours in length and which covers the characteristics and method of assessment and treatment of people who live with HIV/AIDS (CCR section 1887.3).

LMFT & LCSW Only
A licensee who began graduate study prior to January 1, 2004, must take the following courses in his or her first renewal period, unless he or she has taken the course in the past:

- Spousal or Partner Abuse
  Licensees are required to complete a seven-hour one-time course in spousal/partner abuse assessment, detection, and intervention strategies including community resources, cultural factors, and same gender abuse dynamics (BPC sections 4980.57 and 4996.22).
- Aging and Long-Term Care
  Licensees are required to complete a three-hour continuing education course in aging and long-term care. The course could include, but is not limited to, the biological, social, and psychological aspects of aging (BPC sections 4980.395 and 4996.26).

For LCSWs only, on or after January 1, 2012, the course must include instruction on the assessment and reporting of, as well as treatment related to, elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect. (BPC section 4996.26)

Providers
CE must be taken from acceptable providers. A provider that is board-approved must advertise its provider approval number (PCE ####). Accredited and approved universities are also acceptable providers of continuing education and are not required to have an approval number.

A list of providers is available on the Board’s Web site (www.bbs.ca.gov) in the Forms & Publications section and a list of the accredited and approved schools are available in the Applicant section. Contact the approved providers or accredited or approved universities directly for course information. Courses taken from an unacceptable provider will not count towards your CE compliance (BPC sections 4980.54, 4996.22 and 4999.76; CCR section 1887).

Course Content
The Board does not approve specific CE courses. To ensure that a particular course will count toward fulfilling your CE requirements, it is important to:

  - Make sure the provider has a valid PCE number.
  - A valid PCE number confirms that a provider is approved to offer courses for LMFTs, LCSWs and LPCCs. A list of providers with a valid PCE number that includes the provider’s location is available on the Board's Web site.

  - Keep copies of your certificates.
  - The Board does not manage or track CE courses for licensees. Providers do not submit certificates to the Board on behalf of licensees. If a certificate has been misplaced, contact the CE provider for a replacement copy.

A licensee cannot apply for, or petition to have, a CE course approved. Providers must apply and be approved BEFORE any course will count toward the LCSW, LMFT, or LPCC CE requirement.

The Board does not have any information about individual courses offered by providers. Because the Board does not approve specific CE courses, we cannot process requests from licensees for approval of a particular CE course. Providers are required to ensure
that the content of a course is relevant to the practice of marriage and family therapy, clinical counseling, or social work. Self-improvement courses and courses designed for non-practitioners do not count.

Licensees may obtain all of their hours of required continuing education through interactive, electronic means. This includes online, teleconferencing and videotape viewing (CCR section 1887).

Self-study courses
A self-study course is coursework you do at your residence, office, or other private location. It can include audiotapes and booklets. As with any other CE courses, self-study courses must be obtained from board-approved providers or accredited or approved universities. One half of the required CE hours can be earned through self-study (CCR sections 1887, 1887.2, and 1887.3).

License Renewal
The Board will send you a courtesy renewal notice approximately 100 days before your license expires. It is your responsibility to renew your license in a timely manner, whether or not you receive the courtesy renewal notice.

To renew your license, submit the appropriate fee, mark either box A for active or box B for inactive status, read the conviction statement, mark the appropriate box and sign the statement under penalty of perjury. Please note that the correct fee, continuing education, conviction information, and signature are all a part of the renewal process. If any portion of the required information is incomplete or postmarked after the expiration date of the license, your license will expire and a delinquency fee will be required to complete the renewal process.

It takes approximately four to six weeks to process license renewals.

You must have your CE completed BEFORE you submit your renewal fee and application.

Any individual who practices in a licensed capacity with an inactive or expired license is subject to criminal, administrative and/or disciplinary action.

Record Keeping
You need to keep proof of your completed coursework (certificates, transcripts, etc.) for at least two years after the license renewal for which you took the course. Do not submit your course certificates with your renewal application (BPC sections 4980.54, 4996.22 and 4999.76). The Board will destroy any certificates received, unless requested otherwise.

Miscellaneous Information

Hours per course
1 hour of instruction = 1 CE hour
1 semester unit = 15 CE hours
1 quarter unit = 10 CE hours

Double Counting Hours
If you have a LMFT, LCSW, LPCC, or LEP license, you may apply CE hours to both if the course meets the CE guidelines and the subject matter relates to both scopes of practice.

Hours earned for other professional licenses may be applied to your LMFT, LCSW or LPCC license if the provider is approved by the Board and the subject matter relates to the LMFT, LCSW or LPCC scope of practice.

Audits
The Board conducts audits of licensee’s continuing education. If you are audited, you will be notified in writing to submit copies of your CE certificates or course documentation as proof of compliance with the Board’s Licensing Laws and Regulations.

If you are audited, a prompt response is necessary. Failure to comply with the Board’s audit may result in disciplinary action against your license.

Teaching
If the course meets all other CE guidelines, you may claim CE credit for teaching a course. You will receive the same amount of hours as a course attendee would. However, you can claim credit for teaching a course only one time during a single renewal period.

IF you are audited, you will need to provide certificates, transcripts or a certification from your employer of your experience in the area of the requirement. The only exception is the Law & Ethics course. Law & Ethics must be taken for each renewal period.

Provider complaints
You should first contact the provider of the course to resolve the matter. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, send your complaint in writing to the Board office. Include the course name, date, and location, the names of the instructor and provider, and specifics about your complaint.