Important Answers to

Frequently Asked Questions

for Associate Professional Clinical Counselors

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Associate Professional Clinical Counselor
Frequently Asked Questions

The information provided in this publication is supplemental and is intended to serve as a quick answer guide for common questions for those pursuing licensure as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC). The Board’s Statutes and Regulations contain the official legal code sections and language. The BBS encourages you to thoroughly read the Statutes and Regulations pertaining to the professional clinical counseling profession.

For information about the examination process and requirements for registered Associates, see the Board’s website.

A. ASSOCIATE REGISTRATION; LAW AND ETHICS EXAM

1. Can I count hours of experience after I graduate but before I receive an Associate registration number? What is the “90-day rule”? ................................................................. 4

2. When can I begin working in a private practice setting? ........................................... 4

3. Are there any limitations on working in a private practice? ................................. 4

4. Now that my Associate registration has been issued, can I start practicing independently or open my own office? ................................................................. 4

5. When am I required to renew my Associate registration? ..................................... 4

6. Are Associates required to take an exam to renew? ............................................. 5

7. What happens if I don’t pass the California Law and Ethics Exam? ...................... 5

8. Where can I take the 12-hour California Law and Ethics course? ....................... 5

Revised 12/2017
9. What happens if I haven’t passed the Law and Ethics Exam by my registration’s 6-year time limit?  

10. How do I obtain a second or third Associate registration number?  

11. Can I work in a private practice under a subsequent Associate registration number?  

12. What happens once I pass the Law and Ethics Exam?  

B. EXPERIENCE HOURS, SUPERVISION & EMPLOYMENT  

13. What is the breakdown for the required hours of experience to become an LPCC?  

14. What is the definition of “telehealth counseling”?  

15. How many telehealth hours can I gain?  

16. How far back can experience hours be counted? What is the 6-year rule?  

17. How do I determine the amount of supervision I need each week?  

18. What is the required ratio of supervision to client contact hours?  

19. Can I be paid as a 1099 / independent contractor?  

20. Can I be employed as a volunteer?  

21. Who can supervise Associate PCCs?  

22. Who can supervise experience with couples, families or children?  

23. How many supervisees can participate in a session of group supervision?  

24. Can group supervision be broken into one-hour increments?  

25. Can I receive supervision via videoconferencing or over the telephone?  

26. Do my supervisor and I have to be employed by the same employer?  

27. Does my supervisor need to be on site?  

28. Where can I find more information about supervision?  

29. What forms will I need to use to record my experience hours and supervision?  

30. How do I fill out Experience Verification forms or Weekly Logs if I have more than one supervisor in the same work setting?  

31. When do I need to send in supervision-related forms?
32. Should I be concerned about abandonment of my Application for Licensure and Examination? ................................................................. 14

33. What type of employment documentation does the Board require with my Application for Licensure and Examination? ................................................................. 14

34. Do I need to send in originals of my W-2s or most recent pay stub with my Application for Licensure and Examination? ................................................................. 15

35. How can I provide verification of my experience if my supervisor can no longer be located? ........................................................................................................... 15

36. Do I need to resubmit fingerprints with my Application for Licensure and Examination? ........................................................................................................... 15

37. What happens once I submit my Application for Licensure and Examination? ................................................................. 15

38. Do I need to maintain a current Associate registration number to participate in the clinical examination? ................................................................. 16

39. Must I continue to have supervision after my experience hours have been approved? ........................................................................................................... 16

40. Once I pass my exams, can I start practicing independently? ................................................................. 16

41. Once I pass my exams, how do I become officially qualified to assess and treat couples or families? ........................................................................................................... 16
1. Can I count hours of experience after I graduate but before I receive an Associate registration number? What is the “90-day rule”?

If you apply for an Associate registration within 90 days of your degree award date, and are thereafter issued an Associate registration, all postdegree hours of experience may be credited. Hours gained under the “90-day rule” must comply with experience and supervision rules for Associate PCCs. You will not be permitted to work in a private practice setting until your Associate registration number is issued by the Board, and there are no exceptions.

Statute cited: Business and Professions Code (BPC) section 4999.46

2. When can I begin working in a private practice setting?

3. Are there any limitations on working in a private practice?

You may not work in a private practice until your Associate registration number has been issued by the Board. You may work in private practice for a maximum of six (6) years, until your first Associate registration has met its maximum length. There are no exceptions.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.45

4. Now that my Associate registration has been issued, can I start practicing independently or open my own office?

No. Independent practice cannot begin until you have completed all licensure requirements and the Board issues you a license as a LPCC. Independent practice by any unlicensed individual, including an applicant or Associate PCC, is considered unlicensed practice and is subject to disciplinary action by the Board. Additionally, Associates cannot bill clients directly.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4999.30 and 4999.90

5. When am I required to renew my Associate registration?

Registrations expire annually and have a total six (6)-year time limit. Your registration’s expiration date will be printed on your registration certificate. You will be mailed a courtesy renewal application 100 days prior to your expiration date. You can also renew online.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.45
6. Are Associates required to take an exam to renew?

Yes. Associates who have not yet passed the LPCC California Law and Ethics examination MUST take this exam in order to renew. There are no exceptions. To apply for the exam, download the exam application from the Board’s website.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4999.53 and 4999.55

7. What happens if I don’t pass the California Law and Ethics Exam?

You do not need to pass the exam in order to renew your registration; you just need to have taken it. You may retake the exam after at least 90 days have passed from the date you last took the exam. The Application for Re-Examination is available on the Board’s website.

If you don’t pass the exam prior to your registration’s expiration date, you must complete a 12-hour course in California Law and Ethics before you will be allowed to retake the exam during your NEXT renewal cycle. You will not be allowed to retake the exam after your registration expires until you submit proof of completion.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.55; Regulation cited: Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 1805.05

8. Where can I take the 12-hour California Law and Ethics course?

The course must be taken through a continuing education (CE) provider, a county, state or other governmental entity, or a college or university.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.55

9. What happens if I haven’t passed the Law and Ethics Exam by my registration’s 6-year time limit?

California law permits a registration to be renewed a maximum of five (5) times before being cancelled. Associates may apply for a subsequent (second or third) registration number. You cannot be granted a subsequent number unless you have passed the Law and Ethics Exam. There are no exceptions.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.45
10. How do I obtain a second or third Associate registration number?

11. Can I work in a private practice under a subsequent Associate registration number?

Download the Associate PCC Subsequent Registration application from the Board’s website and submit it with the required fee. Be sure to submit it in advance of your registration’s expiration date to allow time for processing.

Only those who have been issued a first Associate registration number may work in a private practice. Associates issued a subsequent registration may NOT work in a private practice setting. There are no exceptions. All other work settings are permissible.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4999.45 and 4999.55

12. What happens once I pass the Law and Ethics Exam?

If you are still earning your hours of supervised experience, you will continue as a registrant until you have completed your hours. No further exams are required until you apply for licensure. You may submit your Application for Licensure and Examination once you have met all education and experience requirements.

Upon approval of your Application for Licensure and Examination, you will be required to take and pass the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Exam (NCMHCE) offered by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.50; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1822.50
13. What is the breakdown for the required hours of experience to become a LPCC?

California law currently requires 3,000 hours of supervised professional experience, including 104 supervised weeks, in order to qualify for LPCC licensure.

Applicants have two different options for gaining supervised experience. Hours can qualify under either Option 1 (new streamlined categories) or Option 2 (pre-existing multiple categories) as described below.

Applicants must fully qualify under either Option 1 OR Option 2. There is no “mixing and matching” between the two categories. Individuals who wish to qualify under Option 2 must submit an Application for Licensure and Examination postmarked no later than December 31, 2020. Otherwise the applicant must fully qualify under Option 1.

**OPTION 1 – NEW STREAMLINED CATEGORIES**

Under Option 1, the supervised work experience categories break down into just two overall types:

- Direct counseling experience *(Minimum 1,750 hours)*
  - Must include a minimum of 150 hours of clinical experience in a hospital or community mental health setting.

- Non-clinical experience *(Maximum 1,250 hours)*
  - May consist of direct supervisor contact, administering and evaluating psychological tests, writing clinical reports, writing progress or process notes, client centered advocacy, and workshops, seminars, training sessions, or conferences directly related to professional clinical counseling.

**OPTION 2 – PRE-EXISTING MULTIPLE CATEGORIES**

This option expires on December 31, 2020

A. Direct Counseling with Individuals, Groups, Couples or Families *(Minimum 1,750 hours)*

B. Group Therapy or Counseling *(Maximum 500 hours)*

C. Telehealth Counseling *(Maximum 375 hours)*

D. Maximum 1,250 hours that include all of the following:
   - Workshops, seminars, training sessions, or conferences directly related to professional clinical counseling *(Maximum 250 hours)*
   - Administering and evaluating psychological tests of counselees, writing clinical reports and progress or process notes *(Maximum 250 hours)*
   - Client-Centered Advocacy
   - Direct Supervisor Contact

E. Minimum of 150 hours of clinical experience in a hospital or community mental health setting
“Community Mental Health Setting” Definition:
A community mental health setting is a clinical setting that meets all of the following requirements:

- Lawfully and regularly provides mental health counseling or psychotherapy
- Clients routinely receive psychopharmacological interventions in conjunction with psychotherapy, counseling, or other psycho-social interventions
- Clients receive coordinated care that includes the collaboration of mental health providers
- Is not a private practice owned by a BBS-licensed professional, a licensed physician or surgeon, a professional corporation of any of these licensed professions, or a corporation of unlicensed individuals.

Experience with Couples, Families and Children
A minimum of 500 hours of supervised experience working directly with couples, families or children is required if the applicant wishes to assess or treat couples or families after being issued a LPCC license. See questions 22 and 41 for more information.

Limitations on Experience Hours:
- Maximum 40 hours of experience earned in any week between all settings
- Maximum six (6) hours of individual or group supervision in any week

104 Supervised Weeks Required:
Each of these 104 weeks must contain:

- One (1) hour of individual or two (2) hours of group supervision during any week in which experience is claimed
- 52 weeks in which the applicant received at least one (1) hour of individual supervision

An applicant for licensure cannot be approved to sit for the clinical exam without completing both the 3,000 hours of experience AND 104 supervised weeks.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.46; Regulation cited: Title 16 CCR section 1820

14. What is the definition of “telehealth counseling”?
15. How many telehealth hours can I gain?

Telehealth refers to the mode of delivering health care services and public health via information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient’s health care while the patient is at the originating site and the health care provider is at a distant site. Associates are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the “Standards of Practice for Telehealth,” available in the Board’s Statutes and Regulations.
Experience Option 1: There is no limit on the number of telehealth hours.

Experience Option 2: Up to 375 hours of supervised experience may be gained providing personal psychotherapy, crisis counseling, or other counseling services via telehealth. This may include telephone counseling.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 2290.5 and 4999.46; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1815.5

16. How far back can experience hours be counted? What is the 6-year rule?

The Board cannot accept hours of experience (including workshops, training or conferences) that are older than six (6) years from the date the Board receives your Application for Licensure and Examination.

For example, the Board receives an Application for Licensure and Examination on 03/24/2018. The Board can only accept hours earned by this applicant between 03/24/2012 and 03/24/2018.

It is important to note that if your Application for Licensure and Examination is abandoned, you will be required to re-apply. Your six (6)-year period will be recalculated to six (6) years back from the date your new application is received. For more information on abandonment, see question 32.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.46

17. How do I determine the amount of supervision I need each week?

18. What is the required ratio of supervision to client contact hours?

“One unit” of supervision = one (1) hour of individual OR two (2) hours of group.

Associates must receive one (1) unit of supervision, as defined above, during any week in which experience is gained in each work setting.

In addition, if the Associate provides more than 10 hours of direct counseling in a single week in his or her work setting, the Associate must receive one (1) additional unit of supervision in that same week in that setting.

The above supervision ratios only apply to Direct Counseling hours (Under Option 2, this also includes Group Counseling and Telehealth Counseling).

EXAMPLE #1: An Associate works one job and provides 25 hours of psychotherapy during a single week. This Associate must receive two (2) units of supervision during that week.

EXAMPLE #2: An Associate works two jobs, and provides 12 hours of psychotherapy at Job A and nine (9) hours at Job B during the same week. This Associate must receive a total of three (3) units of supervision during that week - two (2) units at Job A and one (1) unit at Job B.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.46
19. Can I be paid as a 1099 / independent contractor?
20. Can I be employed as a volunteer?

You must be either be a paid W-2 employee or a volunteer employee. You also may not bill clients directly.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.47

21. Who can supervise Associate PCCs?
22. Who can supervise experience with couples, families or children?

Only licensed mental health professionals can supervise Associates and Associate applicants. Licensed mental health professionals include any of the following:

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs)
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs)
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs)
- Licensed Clinical Psychologists
- Licensed Physicians certified in Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

Additionally, the supervisor must meet all of the following:

- Maintain a current and valid California license
- Be licensed for at least two (2) years prior to the commencement of supervision
- Have practiced psychotherapy, or directly supervised associates or trainees who perform psychotherapy, for at least two (2) of the past five (5) years immediately preceding supervision.
  - Complete a minimum of six (6) hours of supervision training or coursework within 60 days of commencement of supervision and every two-year renewal period thereafter (Psychologists and Psychiatrists are exempt from this training requirement)

Supervisors of Experience with Couples, Families or Children:

500 hours of experience with couples, families or children is required in order to assess and treat couples or families once licensed. Supervisors of this experience must meet all requirements listed above and provide a copy of the “confirmation of qualifications” letter from the Board to the supervisee. The acceptable license types for a supervisor and special requirements are listed below:

- LMFTs
- LPCCs who have already met the qualifications to assess and treat couples and families and have obtained written confirmation from the Board of meeting the qualifications to treat couples and families.
• LCSWs, Licensed Clinical Psychologists, or Licensed Physicians certified in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, who have sufficient education and experience in treating couples and families to competently practice couples and family therapy in California.

Statutes cited: BPC sections 4999.12 and 4999.20; Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1820.5 and 1820.7

23. How many supervisees can participate in a session of group supervision?

Group supervision sessions shall include no more than eight (8) persons receiving supervision, even if there are two or more supervisors present.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.46

24. Can group supervision be broken into one-hour increments?

Group supervision can be broken into one-hour sessions, as long as both increments (full two hours) are provided in the same week as the experience being claimed.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.46

25. Can I receive supervision via videoconferencing or over the telephone?

A Associate PCC working for a governmental entity; school, college, or university; or an institution that is both nonprofit and charitable may obtain supervision via live two-way videoconferencing. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the client confidentiality is preserved.

Individual or group supervision may not be provided over the telephone, as supervision must consist of face-to-face contact.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.46

26. Do my supervisor and I have to be employed by the same employer?

27. Does my supervisor need to be on site?

Only in a private practice setting does a supervisor need to be employed by, and practice at, the same site as the registrant’s employer. In a setting that is not a private practice, the supervisor may be employed by the Associate’s or applicant’s employer on either a paid or voluntary basis. If such employment is on a voluntary basis, a written agreement that addresses the supervisor’s and employer’s legal responsibilities must be signed by the supervisor and the employer prior to commencement of supervision.

The agreement must contain an acknowledgement by the employer that the employer:
• Is aware of the licensing requirements that must be met by the Associate and agrees not to interfere with the supervisor’s legal and ethical obligations to ensure compliance with those requirements; and

• Agrees to provide the supervisor access to clinical records of the clients counseled by the Associate.

Please see the Board’s website for a sample “letter of agreement.”

In any setting, Associates and applicants may only perform services at the place where their employers regularly conduct business, which may include performing services at other locations, so long as the services are performed under the direction and control of their employer and supervisor, and in compliance with the laws and regulations pertaining to supervision.

Whether a supervisor is required to be on site depends on the situation. Supervisors must consider their responsibilities as defined in the LPCC statutes and regulations, which includes taking responsibility for, and control of, the quality of services being provided. Among other responsibilities, supervisors are required to do all of the following, whether they are on site or off site:

• Ensure that the extent, kind and quality of counseling performed by the Associate is consistent with the education, training and experience of the person being supervised.

• Review client/patient records and monitor and evaluate assessment, diagnosis and treatment decisions of the Associate.

• Monitor and evaluate the ability of the Associate to provide services at the site(s) where he or she will be practicing and to the particular clientele being served.

• Ensure compliance with all laws and regulations governing the practice of professional clinical counseling.

Upon request by the Board, a supervisor is required to provide the Board with documentation that verifies the supervisor’s compliance with all requirements.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.47; Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1820 and 1821

28. Where can I find more information about supervision?

Please see the Board’s Guide to Supervision, available on our website.

29. What forms will I need to use to record my experience hours and supervision?

While gaining your hours of experience you will use the following forms, available on the Board’s website:

Responsibility Statement for Supervisors of a PCC Intern (Associate): Your supervisor must sign this form prior to commencing supervision and provide you with the original. Retain for later submission with your Application for Licensure and Examination.
**Supervisory Plan:** Your supervisor must sign this form prior to commencing supervision and provide you with the original. Retain for later submission with your Application for Licensure and Examination.

**Weekly Summary of Experience Hours (“Weekly Log”):** Log your hours on this form on a weekly basis and have your supervisor sign weekly. You will retain the original logs. Do not submit Weekly Logs to the Board except upon request.

**Experience Verification:** This form is completed upon the termination of your supervised experience with your supervisor, and must indicate the total hours completed in each category under your supervisor, your supervisor’s license information and certain information about your employer. Your supervisor will sign the form and provide you with the original for submission with your Application for Licensure and Examination.

Submission of forms as directed in this FAQ will lessen the possibility that the licensing evaluator will need to request additional information from you, which delays the approval of your application.

**30. How do I fill out Experience Verification forms or Weekly Logs if I have more than one supervisor in the same work setting?**

If you are receiving supervision from two individuals in one employment setting, document the hours from each supervisor on separate forms. As long as the time periods on the two forms overlap and the employment setting is the same, the BBS will combine the experience and supervision together when evaluating your experience.

**31. When do I need to send in supervision-related forms?**

All supervision-related forms (Supervisor Responsibility Statement, Supervisory Plan and Experience Verification forms) must be submitted with your Application for Licensure and Examination.

Do not send the Weekly Summary of Experience Hours (“Weekly Log”) form unless the Board specifically requests you to do so.
C. APPLYING FOR LICENSURE

32. Should I be concerned about abandonment of my Application for Licensure and Examination?

Yes – and abandonment could have major consequences. Once an application is abandoned, an applicant may reapply, but must pay a new application fee and meet all current requirements. One of those requirements is that your hours are less than six (6) years old.

If your Application for Licensure and Examination is abandoned, you would lose any hours of experience that are more than six (6) years old, based on the date the Board receives the new Application for Licensure and Examination. See question 16 for more information about the six-year rule.

In accordance with Title 16, California Code of Regulations section 1806, an application shall be deemed abandoned in any of the following circumstances:

- Applicant does not submit the remaining documents or information requested in the application deficiency letter within one (1) year from the date of the deficiency letter.
- Applicant does not complete the application within one (1) year after it has been filed.
- Applicant who has submitted experience hours does not sit for an examination within one (1) year after being notified of initial eligibility to take the examination.
- Applicant who has submitted experience hours does not take an examination within one (1) year from the date the applicant was notified of failing an examination.
- The applicant fails to pay the initial license fee within one (1) year after notification by the Board of successful completion of LPCC licensing requirements.

Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1806

33. What type of employment documentation does the Board require with my Application for Licensure and Examination?

If a Paid Employee: You must provide a W-2 for each year of paid employment with your Application for Licensure and Examination. W-2s are required for all tax years during which you gained experience. For the current tax year, include a photocopy of your most recent pay stub. A copy of your 1040 or other tax filing form is not acceptable.

If a Volunteer Employee: You must provide a letter from your employer verifying your status as a volunteer with your Application for Licensure and Examination. A sample letter verifying volunteer status is available on the Board’s website.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.47
34. Do I need to send in originals of my W-2s or most recent pay stub with my Application for Licensure and Examination?

Originals are not required - photocopies are acceptable.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.47

35. How can I provide verification of my experience if my supervisor can no longer be located?

The Board will review documentation on a case by case basis in order to make a determination. However, we recommend that you submit all of the following:

- Documentation of your attempts to locate and contact your supervisor
- If your supervisor is deceased, documentation such as a copy of the obituary
- The previously signed, original Supervisor Responsibility Statement
- The previously signed, original Supervisory Plan
- The previously signed, original weekly logs
- Documentation by the employer verifying employment of the supervisor and supervisee
- The letter of agreement for supervision if your supervisor was not employed by your employer

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.47; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1820

36. Do I need to resubmit fingerprints with my Application for Licensure and Examination?

Applicants do not need to resubmit fingerprints if one or more of the following applies at the time the Board receives the application:

- Applicant still possesses a current Associate registration number; or
- Applicant’s Associate number has been cancelled for less than 30 days.

Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1815

37. What happens once I submit my Application for Licensure and Examination?

The Board will evaluate your application and notify you either that:

- There are one or more deficiencies in your application. You will have one (1) year from the date of the initial deficiency notice to clear all deficiencies

OR
You have been found eligible for examination, and will be provided with information on how to register.

**Once you pass both required exams:** Download the *Request for Initial License Issuance* form from the Board’s website, and submit it with the required fee. Your license will be issued within 30 business days from the date of receipt.

*Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1806*

**38. Do I need to maintain a current Associate registration number to participate in the clinical examination?**

No. Once your hours have been approved the Board no longer requires you to retain an Associate registration except under certain circumstances. You are required to keep an active and current registration if you are continuing to gain hours of experience, or if you are working in any setting OTHER THAN a school, a government agency, or an institution that is both nonprofit and charitable. Also, you may want to check with your employer to see if they require you to remain registered.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4999.22 and 4999.46*

**39. Must I continue to have supervision after my experience hours have been approved?**

All applicants and Associates must be under supervision at all times by an acceptable licensed mental health professional.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4999.46*

**40. Once I pass my exams, can I start practicing independently?**

No. A successful examinee still must submit a *Request for Initial License Issuance* form and fee before the Board will issue a LPCC license. You will need to download and submit this form and fee upon completion of all licensure requirements. Your license will be issued within 30 business days from the date of receipt. Independent practice cannot begin until the Board issues a license. Otherwise it is considered unlicensed practice, which is subject to disciplinary action by the Board.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4999.30 and 4999.90*

**41. Once I pass my exams, how do I become officially qualified to assess and treat couples or families?**

The scope of practice for LPCCs includes the assessment and treatment of individuals and groups. It does NOT include the assessment or treatment of couples or families unless the LPCC meets all of the qualifications listed below, as defined in California law:
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.

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

3. A minimum of six (6) hours of CE specific to marriage and family therapy during each license renewal cycle. The six (6) hours will count toward the required overall 36 hours of CE.

LPCCs must obtain written confirmation from the Board stating that he or she meets the requirements to assess and treat couples and families prior to assessing or treating a couple or family client.

The Request for Confirmation of Qualifications to Assess and Treat Couples and Families packet is available on the Board’s website.

Statute cited: BPC section 4999.20; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1820.7