

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

- 1
2
3
4 **DATE** January 15, 2026
5
6 **TIME** 9:00 a.m.
7
8 **LOCATIONS**
9 **Primary Location** Department of Consumer Affairs
10 Ruby Room
11 1747 N. Market Blvd., #182
12 Sacramento, CA 95834
13
14 **Alternative Platform** WebEx Video/Phone Conference
15
16 **ATTENDEES**
17 **Members Present at Remote Locations**
18 Wendy Strack, Chair, Public Member
19 Justin Huft, LMFT Member (*Left meeting at 2:20 p.m.*)
20 Eleanor Uribe, LCSW Member
21 Dr. Annette Walker, EdD, Public Member
22
23 **Members Absent** Dr. Nicholas Boyd, PhD, LPCC Member
24
25 **Staff Present at Primary Location**
26 Steve Sodergren, Executive Officer
27 Marlon McManus, Assistant Executive Officer
28 Christy Berger, Regulations Manager
29 Shelley Ganaway, Legal Counsel
30 Rosanne Helms, Legislative Manager
31 Christina Kitamura, Administrative Analyst
32
33 **Other Attendees** Public participation via WebEx video conference/phone conference
34 and in-person at Department of Consumer Affairs
35
36
37

1 **1. Call to Order and Establishment of Quorum**

2
3 Wendy Strack, Chair of the Workforce Development Committee (Committee),
4 called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. Roll was called, and a quorum was
5 established.
6

7 **2. Introductions**

8
9 Committee members introduced themselves during role call; staff and public
10 attendees introduced themselves.
11

12 **3. Consent Calendar: Discussion and Possible Approval of January 15, 2026**
13 **Workforce Development Committee Meeting Minutes**

14
15 Motion: Approve the January 15, 2026 Workforce Development Committee
16 meeting minutes.
17

18 M/S: Walker/Uribe
19

20 Public Comment: None
21

22 Vote: 4 yea, 0 nay, 1 absent. Motion carried.

Member	Vote
Dr. Nicholas Boyd	Absent
Justin Huft	Yes
Wendy Strack	Yes
Eleanor Uribe	Yes
Dr. Annette Walker	Yes

23
24 **4. Discussion and Possible Action to Make Recommendations Regarding**
25 **Education Requirements for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists:**
26 **Accreditation, Core Content, and Practicum Requirements (Business and**
27 **Professions Code (BPC) §4980.36)**

28
29 At its January 15, 2026 meeting, the Committee discussed Step 1 – Qualifying
30 Degree Accreditation, Core Content, and Practicum Requirements.
31

32 **Previous Discussion**

33 The Committee reviewed possible language on school accreditation, including
34 whether COAMFTE or CACREP-MFT accreditation could substitute for reviewing
35 certain educational requirements. Although baseline accreditation language has
36 been established, the Committee agreed to revisit the topic after practicum,
37 graduate-level coursework, and supplemental coursework requirements are
38 finalized to determine which requirements, if any, can be considered fulfilled by
39 accredited programs.
40

1 The Committee finalized core content (program structure) requirements. A
2 qualifying degree must:

- 3 • Be a planned course of study grounded in systemic theory and
4 approaches, designed to train practitioners to provide direct therapeutic
5 services within marriage and family systems.
- 6 • Clearly state in catalogs and official program materials that the degree's
7 purpose is to educate and train marriage and family therapists.
- 8 • Integrate marriage and family therapy principles throughout the
9 curriculum.
- 10 • Develop students' abilities to explore and apply culturally responsive skills
11 and interventions.

12 **Current Discussion**

13 The Committee continued its work on practicum requirements, following
14 concerns raised at the previous meeting about the need for refinement. Three
15 key issues were raised during the last meeting:
16

- 17 • The number of required practicum hours
- 18 • Clarification regarding the qualifications and expectations of practicum
19 supervisors
- 20 • A request from the schools for more detailed guidance on practicum
21 standards so the Board's expectations are clearly understood.

22
23 These updates must align with two principles: practicum components cannot be
24 remediated, and requirements must apply uniformly to in-state and out-of-state
25 programs.

26
27 Staff presented proposed language, which was provided as Attachment A in the
28 meeting materials.

29
30 SMEs recommended increasing the required practicum hours to 240. Supervisor
31 qualification requirements were clarified to align with existing Board standards,
32 including verification of licensure and experience, with parallel expectations for
33 out-of-state supervisors. Schools would be required to verify supervisor
34 qualifications before trainees begin accruing hours.

35
36 Staff and SMEs also developed more specific practicum standards, including site
37 approval, a written agreement outlining responsibilities, required monitoring and
38 at least one observation, defined clinical tasks for trainees, and a clear definition
39 of acceptable direct client contact.

40
41 The proposed changes would apply only to degrees begun on or after January 1,
42 2030, ensuring programs have sufficient time to adjust and that current students
43 are not adversely affected.
44

1 A written public comment was submitted by Lisa Turay, a licensed professional
2 clinical counselor from Cal Poly Humboldt. She recommended that the Board
3 specify the required content for the twelve units completed prior to the start of
4 practicum. She noted that new trainees often lack foundational knowledge in
5 areas such as ethics, mandated reporting, and suicide risk assessment, which
6 she currently must cover during supervision. She also proposed increasing the
7 minimum required pre-practicum units from twelve to fifteen.

8
9 Discussion

10 Huft: Expressed support for the recommendations submitted by Lisa Terrey,
11 agreeing that law and ethics, theories, and psychopathology coursework should
12 be completed prior to the start of practicum. He also reiterated a concern he has
13 raised in previous meetings regarding universities that claim religious exemptions
14 to Title IX. He noted that such exemptions allow institutions to discriminate on the
15 basis of marriage, gender, or sexual orientation and to teach related therapeutic
16 approaches, which he stated is inconsistent with the Board's mission and values
17 related to equity and inclusion. He encouraged the Board to find a way to ensure
18 that programs with Title IX religious exemptions are not approved for
19 licensure-qualifying coursework.

20
21 Motion: Direct staff to make any discussed changes and any non-substantive
22 changes.

23
24 M/S: Huft/Walker

25
26 Public Comments

27 Shanti Ezrine, California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists
28 (CAMFT): Due to the volume of new language and proposed changes, his team
29 anticipates having questions regarding definitions, new requirements, and
30 oversight responsibilities. However, they have not yet had sufficient time to fully
31 review the materials. He explained that his team will conduct a detailed internal
32 review and then follow up with staff to provide questions and feedback.

33
34 Gina Mertz, LMFT, William Jessup University: Requested clarification regarding
35 the requirement that either the site or the school monitor trainees' clinical work.
36 She noted that her program at Jessup University does not operate a full clinical
37 training site, so direct observation is conducted by the practicum site supervisor
38 rather than faculty. She asked whether this is the reason the language uses the
39 word "or," as she is concerned it could otherwise create confusion.

40
41 Staff clarified that the "or" was included for that purpose.

42
43 Gina Mertz: Expressed agreement with Board Member Huft's remarks regarding
44 coursework that should be required prior to practicum. She supported requiring
45 law and ethics, psychopathology, and theories courses before students begin
46 practicum to ensure they have adequate foundational knowledge.

1 Gina Mertz: Responded to Board Member Huft’s comments regarding religious
2 exemptions, noting that many Board-approved LMFT programs in California are
3 religious institutions. She stated that Jessup University is fully compliant with all
4 Board-required core competencies and undergoes regular program reviews,
5 during which the Board evaluates syllabi, coursework, and program design. She
6 emphasized that Jessup is fully aligned with state and Board regulations for MFT
7 and LPCC training.

8
9 Further Discussion

10 Helms: Ms. Helms asked what consequences would apply if a trainee did not
11 complete the required coursework before beginning practicum. She raised
12 concerns about enforceability, noting that practicum cannot be retroactively
13 corrected if coursework is taken out of sequence. She questioned whether such
14 a trainee would become ineligible for licensure, whether remediation would be
15 possible, or whether the timing would function only as a recommendation.

16
17 Huft: Responded by asking whether it is reasonable to expect programs to
18 maintain such requirements, noting that this is standard in the programs he has
19 seen. Expressed concern that not requiring coursework before practicum,
20 particularly amid the rise of diploma mills, could compromise client care. He
21 suggested that if coursework is required, any practicum hours completed before
22 taking it would presumably be invalidated.

23
24 Walker: Drawing on her experience overseeing graduate admissions and
25 conducting course evaluations, noted that course titles can be misleading and
26 that evaluating actual course content is often necessary to determine whether
27 requirements are met. She referenced her earlier comments about applicants
28 who are “grandfathered in” and suggested that a similar evaluative process could
29 apply here. She explained that, in some educational settings, equivalency
30 reviews are used to determine whether an applicant’s coursework satisfies
31 specific requirements even if the degree is not in the exact field.

32
33 Helms: Noted that the Board would likely need to establish an equivalency
34 process because some applicants will inevitably complete required coursework
35 out of sequence. She cautioned that if the law strictly requires coursework to be
36 completed before practicum, the Board would be obligated to reject applicants
37 who did not follow that order, even if they otherwise meet all educational
38 requirements. She expressed concern that such rejections would be harsher than
39 the Board’s typical approach to coursework issues.

40
41 Sodergren: Noted that the Board has not historically regulated the timing of
42 coursework but agreed that completing key courses before practicum is
43 important. He cautioned that enforcing such a requirement could lead to
44 applicants being disqualified, which may face resistance from educational
45 institutions. He acknowledged that an equivalency process might be necessary

1 but pointed out the challenge that creating equivalencies could undermine the
2 purpose of a strict sequencing requirement.

3
4 Additional Public Comment and Discussion

5 Gina Mertz: Suggested exploring a transition or “happy medium” by strongly
6 recommending—rather than requiring—that key coursework be completed before
7 practicum. She noted this would align with best practices and her concerns about
8 clinical competency, emphasizing the importance of courses such as theories,
9 psychopathology, law and ethics, and basic counseling skills.

10
11 Uribe: Noted that accrediting bodies typically outline required coursework
12 standards and cautioned against unintentionally excluding qualified applicants.
13 She suggested that articulation or equivalency evaluations may help determine
14 whether applicants’ prior coursework meets requirements and emphasized the
15 need for more information to ensure fair inclusion.

16
17 Helms: Supported using encouragement language rather than strict
18 requirements. She explained that schools often follow the Board’s guidance, but
19 making coursework sequencing mandatory—without a way to remediate—could
20 exclude many qualified candidates, especially transfers and out-of-state
21 students. She favored strongly recommending that programs ensure students
22 complete key courses before practicum, while stopping short of making it a
23 mandate.

24
25 The Chair opened the floor for further public comment. No further comments
26 were presented.

27
28 Amended Motion: Direct staff to make any discussed changes and any non-
29 substantive changes, and to work with the SMEs on language regarding pre-
30 practicum coursework.

31
32 M/S: Huft/Walker

33
34 Vote: 4 yea, 0 nay, 1 absent. Motion carried.

Member	Vote
Dr. Nicholas Boyd	Absent
Justin Huft	Yes
Wendy Strack	Yes
Eleanor Uribe	Yes
Dr. Annette Walker	Yes

35

1 **5. Discussion and Possible Action to Make Recommendations Regarding**
2 **Education Requirements for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists:**
3 **Defining an Integrated Degree Program and Allowing Transfer Units. (BPC**
4 **§4980.36)**
5

6 The Committee reviewed the statutory requirement that a qualifying degree be a
7 single, integrated program, noting that core coursework must be completed
8 within the degree itself, while certain non-core topics may be taken elsewhere or
9 after graduation. Although this requirement is longstanding, evolving program
10 structures have created uncertainty about what qualifies as an integrated degree.
11 Staff identified recurring issues—such as school closures, combined
12 master’s/doctoral pathways, transfer credit from other graduate programs, and
13 graduate coursework taken during undergraduate study—that highlight
14 inconsistent interpretations. To provide clarity and maintain the intent that
15 degrees not be assembled from unrelated programs, staff proposed creating a
16 definition of an integrated degree with limited, clearly defined exceptions for the
17 Committee’s consideration.
18

19 Staff presented proposed language, which was provided as Attachment A in the
20 meeting materials. The proposal clarifies that practicum coursework cannot be
21 transferred and must be completed within the qualifying degree. These updates
22 aim to maintain the integrity of a cohesive MFT program while offering limited
23 flexibility and consistent outcomes in uncommon situations.
24

25 The Committee opened the floor to public comment.
26

27 Public Comment

28 Gina Mertz, William Jessup University: Stated that the proposed changes are
29 very helpful, especially for handling transfer units. They suggested adding
30 guidance on time limits for accepting older coursework and recommended
31 considering language encouraging students who transfer units to audit the
32 equivalent course, noting that clearer standards would assist universities.
33

34 Sara Carrasco, William Jessup University: Suggested adding language to ensure
35 that any transfer courses allowed are California-specific when relevant.
36

37 Shanti Ezrine, CAMFT: Noted that his team will conduct a detailed review of the
38 proposed language and later follow up with staff. He asked several high-level
39 questions, including:

- 40 • Why practicum coursework is not eligible for transfer and whether this
41 affects license portability from other states?
- 42 • Whether there is a time limit for exceptions, particularly for undergraduate
43 transfer credits?
- 44 • Whether the definition of a “single integrated degree” accounts for
45 non-linear educational paths, such as students shifting fields before
46 entering an MFT program?

- Whether the terms “receiving institution” and “degree-granting institution” are intended to mean the same thing.

Ms. Helm’s responses to Mr. Ezrine’s questions:

1. Explained that practicum coursework was not designated as transferable because it is considered a core component of training. The subject matter experts agreed that practicum should be completed at the institution that grants the qualifying degree.
2. The transfer rules under discussion apply only to coursework being transferred into a master’s program, so she does not believe they would affect license portability. She invited examples if there are scenarios where portability could be impacted.
3. Explained that if a student begins in another field, such as sociology, and later enters an MFT program, relevant graduate-level coursework (up to twelve units) may be accepted if the institution chooses to integrate it into the student’s degree transcript. Acceptance is at the school’s discretion and applies only to coursework related to the field; unrelated courses would not qualify.
4. The differing terms will need further review and refinement

Discussion

Walker: Sought clarification on the terms “degree-granting institution” and its responsibilities. She asked whether the institution awarding the integrated degree would be solely responsible for ensuring compliance with current laws under the proposed framework.

Helms: Agreed that the terminology needs refinement. She stated she will review and further define terms such as “degree-granting institution” and “transferring institution,” and update the language to ensure consistent usage throughout.

Staff will continue working on this and bring it back to the next Committee meeting for further discussion. No action was taken.

Justine Huft left the meeting. Roll call was taken and quorum was re-established.

6. Discussion and Possible Action to Make Recommendations Regarding Education Requirements for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists: Discussion of Graduate-Level Course Content Requirements and Supplemental Coursework Requirements (BPC §§4980.36, 4980.37, 4980.41, 4980.78, and 4980.81)

The Committee reviewed next phase of the MFT education review project, which focuses on defining graduate-level course content, including identifying the core content areas, unit requirements, and determining the scope and limits of remediation.

1 Staff reviewed requirements for current in-state applicants, in-state applicants
2 with older degrees, and out-of-state applicants. Using these requirements, staff
3 created a preliminary outline of proposed graduate-level content areas, provided
4 as Chart 1 in the meeting materials.

5
6 Additionally, staff compiled the current supplemental coursework requirements,
7 which may be completed at the graduate level or separately through continuing
8 education (CE), provided as Chart 2 of the meeting materials.

9
10 Staff noted that graduate-level coursework will emphasize broad foundational
11 MFT principles, while more specific or California-focused topics would remain
12 supplemental and remediable through graduate courses or continuing education.

13
14 Attachment A was provided to summarize foundational coursework requirements
15 for COAMFTE and CACREP. Attachment B was provided to summarize
16 coursework requirements in Oregon, Ohio, and Texas.

17
18 Discussion

19 Walker: Asked whether maternal mental health and perinatal mental health were
20 the same.

21
22 Sodergren: Explained that bills were introduced referencing maternal mental
23 health and menopausal mental health. Staff will review the terminology, including
24 the term perinatal mental health.

25
26 Public Comment

27 Sara Carrasco, William Jessup University: Requested clarification on how
28 compliance documentation will be handled, specifically whether course content
29 requirements must be documented on Form B and whether the additional
30 coursework certification should include all supplemental requirements completed
31 before licensure.

32
33 Helms: Clarified that all requirements will be needed at the time of associate
34 registration. Form B is expected to stay largely the same, but updated to include
35 the new requirements.

36
37 Gina Mertz, William Jessup University: Recommended adding theories,
38 foundational counseling skills, and group therapy to the list of required
39 coursework.

40
41 Shanti Ezrine, CAMFT: Asked whether Chart 1 differs from existing law (BPC
42 4980.36), including what was carried over, added, or omitted, and noted they will
43 likely suggest additional items such as case management. Also asked how the
44 supplemental coursework requirements in Chart 2 were determined."
45

1 Helms: Explained that the supplemental coursework list was created by
2 compiling all current hour-based requirements, with discussion items added
3 based on stakeholder suggestions. Everything remains open for revision. For
4 Chart 1, it blends existing MFT requirements into broader course blocks and
5 highlights key differences, including new standalone courses on family systems,
6 intimate and romantic partners, and children, as well as a stronger focus on
7 research use and critical review.

8
9 Elyse Springer, LMFT, California Chapter of Postpartum Support International:
10 Urged the Board to use the term “perinatal mental health” instead of “maternal
11 mental health,” noting it better reflects the full clinical period from preconception
12 through one year postpartum and includes all affected parents and caregivers.
13 Explained why the perinatal period is distinct from childbirth and parenting,
14 highlighted its recognition in California’s behavioral health system, and
15 emphasized that aligning training with this defined service window would better
16 prepare the workforce.

17
18 Dr. Ben Caldwell, PsyD, LMFT: Expressed appreciation for Ms. Helms’ work
19 leading the process and thanked everyone for their feedback, encouraging
20 continued input.

21
22 Further work is needed on this topic, and discussion will continue. No action was
23 taken.

24 25 **7. Update Regarding the Workforce Development Action Plan**

26
27 Staff presented a new reporting format designed to better communicate progress
28 on the Committee’s action plan. The updated format aligns tasks with the
29 objectives in the Board’s draft strategic plan and tracks work within the Board’s
30 licensing and examination goal areas. Staff noted that these objectives and tasks
31 remain preliminary until the Board adopts its new strategic plan, anticipated in
32 May 2026.

33
34 The new action plan was provided in the meeting materials as Attachment A.

35 36 Discussion

37 Walker: Noted the chart is consistent with a similar chart used in the Outreach and
38 Education Committee and emphasized adding references to the strategic plan.

39
40 Public Comment: None

41 42 **8. Suggestions for Future Agenda items**

43
44 Uribe: Eleanor suggested considering whether the subject matter expert group
45 should be expanded.
46

1 Gina Mertz, William Jessup University: Proposed inviting all approved program
2 directors in California to a large virtual meeting so they can provide broader input
3 on the educational requirements, noting current representation is limited.
4

5 **9. Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda**

6
7 None

8
9 **10. Adjournment**

10
11 The Committee adjourned at 3:06 p.m.