Board of Behavioral Sciences

Guide to Licensure Requirements

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

OUT-OF-STATE AND OUT-OF-COUNTRY APPLICANTS

This guide provides a summary of requirements for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) applicants with an out-of-state license, and/or an out-of-state or out-of-country degree.

"Out-of-State degree" means a degree from a school located outside of California, or from an online program that is not designed to meet California's requirements. "Out-of-Country degree" means a degree earned from a school located outside of the United States or its territories.

Note: All code sections listed in this document may be accessed by clicking on the link provided or by accessing the *Statutes and Regulations*, available at www.bbs.ca.gov (scroll to the blue bar at the bottom of the page).

1. What are the two paths to licensure for out-of-state applicants?

Path A is called "Licensure by Credential". It is for applicants who meet ALL FOUR of the qualifications listed in #2 below.

Path B is called "Licensure via Education and Experience". It is for applicants who do NOT meet ALL FOUR of the requirements of Path A.

2. What are the qualifications I need to apply under Path A?

Path A "Licensure by Credential" is only available if you meet **ALL four** of the following qualifications:

1. You have held a license as a Marriage and Family Therapist in another United States jurisdiction for at least two years (time as an associate or intern does not count toward this requirement); and
2. Your LMFT license is at the highest level for independent clinical practice in that jurisdiction; and
3. The license you hold as an LMFT is current, and has been active and unrestricted for at least two years immediately before the date the Board receives your application; and
4. The degree that qualified you for your LMFT license is a master's or doctorate degree obtained from a school holding a regional or national institutional accreditation recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), or a school approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE).

If you do NOT meet ALL FOUR of the above requirements, you must apply under Path B. You may also apply for a registration as an Associate Marriage and Family Therapist (AMFT), which allows you to work under supervision while you complete the requirements to become licensed under Path B *(access the application at www.bbs.ca.gov>Applicant> LMFT)*.

3. I meet all four of the qualifications to apply under Path A. What do I need to do to become licensed?

Applicants who qualify to apply under Path A must complete all of the requirements specified in Business and Professions Code (BPC) section 4980.72 (as summarized below), and submit the *Application for Licensure – Path A (access at www.bbs.ca.gov> LMFT).*

1. COURSEWORK

You must complete all of the coursework described below before your *Application for Licensure* can be approved. Courses must be taken at the graduate level from a school that holds a regional or national institutional accreditation recognized by the USDE, a school approved by the BPPE, or an acceptable continuing education provider *(access at www.bbs.ca.gov>Licensees).* Undergraduate coursework cannot be accepted.

2. EXAMINATION

Once your *Application for Licensure* is approved, you will be eligible to take the LMFT California Law and Ethics Exam. Information about the exam is available under the Exams tab of the Board's website *(www.bbs.ca.gov).*

3. SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR INITIAL LICENSE ISSUANCE AND FEE

Once you have passed the exam, you must submit a *Request for Initial License Issuance* form and pay a $200 initial licensure fee. Allow up to 30 days for processing.

PATH A: REQUIRED COURSEWORK

1 semester unit = 15 hours; 1 quarter unit = 10 hours; 1 semester unit = 1.5 quarter units

COURSE	LENGTH	CONTENT REQUIRED
California Law and Ethics ***NOTE:*** *This is a SEPARATE requirement from the California Law and Ethics Exam*	12 hours	Must be California-specific and include instruction in advertising, scope of practice, scope of competence, treatment of minors, confidentiality, dangerous patients, psychotherapist-patient privilege, recordkeeping, patient access to records, state and federal laws relating to confidentiality of patient health information, dual relationships, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, online therapy, insurance reimbursement, civil liability, disciplinary actions and unprofessional conduct, ethics complaints and ethical standards, termination of therapy, standards of care, relevant family law, therapist disclosures to patients, the application of legal and ethical standards in different types of work settings, and licensing law and licensing process.

PATH A: REQUIRED COURSEWORK (continued)		
COURSE	**LENGTH**	**CONTENT REQUIRED**
Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting in California	7 hours	Instruction must include detailed knowledge of the California Child Abuse Neglect and Reporting Act (CANRA). It must also include assessment and methods of reporting of sexual assault, neglect, severe neglect, general neglect, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, corporal punishment or injury, and abuse in out-of-home care. The training shall also include physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, crisis counseling techniques, community resources, rights and responsibilities of reporting, consequences of failure to report, caring for a child's needs after a report is made, sensitivity to previously abused children and adults, and implications and methods of treatment for children and adults.
California Cultures and the Social and Psychological Implications of Socioeconomic Position	15 hours or 1 semester unit	Instruction must include an understanding of various California cultures and the social and psychological implications of socioeconomic position.
Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention	6 hours of coursework or applied experience	Course must cover suicide risk assessment and intervention. For more information see BPC section 4980.396.

4. What are the qualifications required to become licensed under Path B?

Below is a list of requirements for becoming licensed under Path B, as required by BPC sections 4980.74, 4980.78 and 4980.81.

1. Your degree must meet all of the requirements described in question 5; and
2. You must remediate any deficiencies in your degree (where allowed) as described in question 6; and
3. You must complete the additional coursework as described in question 6; and
4. You must fulfill the experience requirements as described in question 9; and
5. You must pass the California Law and Ethics Exam and the California Clinical LMFT Exam as described in question 10.

See the instructions in the *Application for Licensure – Path B* for full details. You may apply for AMFT registration, which would allow you to work under supervision while you work to meet the Path B licensure requirements *(access the application at www.bbs.ca.gov>Applicant>LMFT).*

5. What are the minimum degree requirements for licensure under Path B?

California law requires a degree to meet certain minimum requirements to qualify under Path B. The law allows for some types of coursework to be remediated, and also allows a limited number of units to be remediated. Unfortunately, in some cases an applicant's degree will not qualify at all, and a new degree would be required.

If your out-of-state or out-of-country degree does NOT fully contain ALL of the minimum requirements listed on the next page, it will NOT qualify for licensure in California.

5. What are the minimum degree requirements for licensure under Path B?

➡ These are minimums only - see question 6 for ADDITIONAL educational requirements you must meet prior to approval of your *Application for Licensure*.

✓ **A master's or doctorate degree obtained from a school that holds a regional or national institutional accreditation recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE), or a school approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE)**

✓ **Degree fully contains a minimum of 48 semester units or 72 quarter units**

✓ **Degree fully contains a minimum of 12 semester units or 18 quarter units in marriage, family and child counseling and systems approaches to treatment**

✓ **Degree fully contains 6 semester units or 9 quarter units of practicum that includes 225 hours of supervised face-to-face counseling experience**
(up to 75 of those hours may be client-centered advocacy)

⇨ *Exception: If you hold a current LMFT license in good standing in another state or country at the highest level, the practicum requirements are waived*

6. What additional units and coursework must I complete prior to approval of my Application for LMFT Licensure under Path B?

CALIFORNIA LAW AND ETHICS COURSE

Note: **This is a separate requirement from the California Law and Ethics Exam.**

➡ **If you completed a 2 semester unit or 3 quarter unit law and ethics course that does NOT contain California content:**

You must complete a 12-hour California Law and Ethics course that contains the content specified in BPC section 4980.78(b)(2). This course must be taken from an acceptable continuing education provider (see question 7).

➡ **If you completed a law and ethics course that is LESS THAN 2 semester units or 3 quarter units:**

You must complete a graduate level California law and ethics course to bring your total to 2 semester units or 3 quarter units. This course must be taken from an accredited or approved school (see question 7). **A CE course will not be accepted.**

DEGREE REMEDIATION

Prior to approval of your *Application for Licensure*, you will be required to complete additional units and coursework if any of the following are deficient within your degree:

Overall Units: If you began your degree program on or after August 1, 2012 OR graduated after December 31, 2018, and your degree contained less than 60 semester units or 90 quarter units, you must take graduate level coursework to bring your total to 60 semester units or 90 quarter units (you may remediate a maximum of 12 semester units or 18 quarter units). **CE courses will not be accepted.**

Additional Coursework: You must also complete "Additional Coursework" at the graduate level from an acceptable CE provider as specified in BPC sections 4980.78 and 4980.81 prior to approval of your *Application for Licensure*. Certain courses must be California-specific. See the chart beginning on page 9 for a list of courses and required content.

REMEDIATION OF UNITS AND ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

If you are remediating overall degree units and are deficient in Additional Coursework, you may fulfill both at the same time.

For Example:

You take a course on "Multicultural Counseling Theories and Techniques."

➡ The course provides education about California cultures.

✓ This course may then also count toward fulfilling Additional Coursework Item c) "California Cultures and the Social and Psychological Implications of Socioeconomic Position."

➡ The course also contained content that covers "experiences of race, ethnicity, class, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender, and disability, and their incorporation into the psychotherapeutic process."

✓ This course may then also count toward fulfilling Additional Coursework item k) "Multicultural Development and Cross-Cultural Interaction."

7. Who is an acceptable course provider?

➡ **For Overall Degree Units OR**

➡ **California Law and Ethics (2 semester units or 3 quarter units) course**

Courses must be taken at the graduate level from a school with a regional or national institutional accreditation recognized by the USDE, or from a school approved by the BPPE. **CE courses will not be accepted.**

➡ **For the 12-hour California Law and Ethics course OR**

➡ **Additional Coursework**

Must be taken at the graduate level from an acceptable continuing education provider *(access at www.bbs.ca.gov>Licensees>Continuing Education).*

8. What if my degree is from a school located outside of the United States or its territories?

In addition to meeting all of the requirements listed in this document and in the BPC, you must obtain an evaluation of your degree by a foreign credential evaluation service to determine equivalency with California's requirements. You must submit the evaluation with your application (per BPC section 4980.76). The evaluation service must be a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services *(www.naces.org)*. You will also be required to submit an official transcript.

Suggestion: Before paying a credentials evaluation service for an evaluation, compare your degree to California's requirements by using the optional "Out-of-Country Degree Program Worksheet" contained in the *Application for Licensure* to help you determine whether to proceed.

9. What are the experience requirements of Path B?

➡ **If you are licensed as an LMFT in another state or country at the highest level for independent clinical practice:**

Your requirements will depend on the conditions under which you were licensed, as described below:

- If you are currently licensed as an LMFT in another United States jurisdiction that requires at least 3,000 hours of supervised experience:

  You do not need to submit verification of experience.

- If you are licensed as an LMFT in another country:

  You must submit verification of 3,000 hours of substantially equivalent* experience that includes 104 supervised weeks.

- If you were licensed as an LMFT in another state or country that requires LESS than 3,000 hours of supervised experience:

  If the state or country requires less than 3,000 hours of supervised experience (South Carolina or Florida for example), you must make up the deficit using either or both of the following methods:

  - Counting time actively licensed as an LMFT in good standing in another state or country at the rate of 100 hours per month licensed at the highest level (up to a maximum of 1,200 hours, with no verification of experience required for these hours); and/or
  - Submitting additional hours of substantially equivalent* supervised experience.

➡ **All other applicants:**

You must submit verification of substantially equivalent* supervised work experience totaling 3,000 hours and 104 weeks.

9. What are the experience requirements of Path B? (continued)

***Substantially equivalent experience**

For your supervised experience to be accepted as "substantially equivalent" it must meet ALL of the following requirements:

- Experience must have been gained within the six (6) years prior to the Board's receipt of your California *Application for Licensure*.
- Your 3,000 hours must meet the following requirements:
  - **Direct counseling experience (Minimum 1,750 hours)** with individuals, groups, couples or families**.** A minimum of 500 of these hours must be gained diagnosing and treating couples, families and children.
  - **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 marriage, family, and child counseling.
- Up to 1,300 pre-degree hours gained while in your degree program may be accepted. Of those 1,300 pre-degree hours, the Board can accept a maximum of 750 hours of direct counseling experience (the rest of your direct counseling experience must have been gained post-degree).
- Experience must have been supervised by a licensed mental health professional who met all of the following qualifications:
  - Licensed in the state or country where the hours were earned, at the highest level for independent practice as a LCSW, LMFT, LPCC, Licensed Psychologist or Board-Certified Psychiatrist; and
  - Licensed as one of the above for at least two years prior to the commencement of supervision; and
  - License was active and in good standing at the time your hours were earned.
  - If your experience was earned in another country, your supervisor must also meet the following qualifications:
    - The supervisor's license was issued by a government regulatory body; and
    - The supervisor completed post-degree supervised experience in order to get their license; and
    - The supervisor took a licensing exam recognized by their country's regulatory body; and
    - The supervisor holds at least a master's degree in a mental health discipline recognized by the Board.
- If the state or country in which your hours were earned required a registration in order to gain experience, you must have been registered during while earning your hours.

9. What are the experience requirements of Path B? (continued)

If you need to gain additional hours

If additional hours are needed and will be gained in California, you must first register as an Associate and comply with all requirements for hours gained in California *(access the application at www.bbs.ca.gov>Applicant>LMFT).*

10. What are the examination requirements of Path B?

You must pass both of the following exams:

- California Law and Ethics Exam: You will be eligible to take this exam after issuance of your Associate number or upon approval of your *Application for Licensure*.
- California Clinical LMFT Exam: You will be eligible to take this exam after approval of your *Application for Licensure* and after passing the Law and Ethics Exam.

For QUESTIONS, contact:

bbs.amft@dca.ca.gov

BBS Board of Behavioral Sciences

Summary – Path B LMFT Education Requirements

1. OVERALL DEGREE UNITS

- Degree program began prior to 8/1/2012 → Minimum 48 semester units or 72 quarter units within degree or cannot qualify for licensure
- Degree program began on or after 8/1/2012 →
  - Minimum 48 semester or 72 quarter units within degree or cannot qualify for licensure
  - If above minimum is met, must complete 60 semester units or 90 quarter units total prior to approval of *Application for Licensure*

2. CALIFORNIA LAW AND ETHICS (L&E) COURSE

(see BPC section 4980.78(b)(2) for required course content)

- Completed a 2 semester unit or 3 quarter unit Law and Ethics course but no California content → 12-hour California Law and Ethics course prior to issuance of Associate registration
- No Law and Ethics course or course is short units → 2 semester unit or 3 quarter unit California Law and Ethics course prior to issuance of Associate registration

3. PRACTICUM

- 6 semester or 9 quarter units AND
- 225 hours of supervised face-to-face counseling experience (up to 75 hours may be client-centered advocacy)

- Holds a **valid** license in good standing in another state or country **as an LMFT** at the highest level → Practicum requirement waived
- All Others → Degree program must meet practicum unit/hour requirements or cannot qualify for licensure

4. MARRIAGE, FAMILY & CHILD COUNSELING & SYSTEMS APPROACH

12 semester units or 18 quarter units within degree or cannot qualify for licensure

5. ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

Must remediate prior to approval of *Application for Licensure*. Required courses listed on the following pages.

PATH B: ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK REQUIRED PRIOR TO LMFT LICENSURE APPLICANTS WITH AN OUT-OF-STATE OR OUT-OF-COUNTRY DEGREE		
Note: 1 semester unit = 15 hours; 1 quarter unit = 10 hours *1 semester unit = 1.5 quarter units*		
COURSE	**LENGTH**	**CONTENT REQUIRED**
a) Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention	6 hours of coursework or applied experience	Course must cover suicide risk assessment and intervention. For more information see BPC section 4980.396.
b) Mental Health Recovery Oriented Care and Methods of Service Delivery	45 hours or 3 semester units	Instruction must cover principles of mental health recovery-oriented care and methods of service delivery in recovery-oriented practice environments, including structured meetings with various consumers and family members of consumers of mental health services to enhance understanding of their experience of mental illness, treatment and recovery.
c) California Cultures and the Social and Psychological Implications of Socioeconomic Position	15 hours or 1 semester unit	Instruction must include an understanding of various California cultures and the social and psychological implications of socioeconomic position.
d) Diagnosis, Assessment, Prognosis and Treatment of Mental Disorders	2 semester units	Must include diagnosis, assessment, prognosis and treatment of mental disorders, including: • Severe mental disorders • Promising mental health practices • Evidence-based practices
e) Psychological Testing	15 hours or 1 semester unit	Instruction must cover psychological testing.
f) Psychopharmacology	15 hours or 1 semester unit	Instruction must cover psychopharmacology.

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK REQUIRED PRIOR TO LMFT LICENSURE APPLICANTS WITH AN OUT-OF-STATE OR OUT-OF-COUNTRY DEGREE *(continued)*		
COURSE	**LENGTH**	**CONTENT REQUIRED**
g) Developmental Issues from Infancy to Old Age	15 hours or 1 semester unit *(if deficient in a single topic listed, may remediate by taking 3 hours of instruction in each missing topic)*	Instruction must include: • Developmental Issues from infancy to old age • The effects of developmental issues on individuals, couples and family relationships. • The psychological, psychotherapeutic, and health implications of developmental issues and their effects. • The understanding of the impact that personal and social insecurity, social stress, low educational levels, inadequate housing and malnutrition have on human development.
h) Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting in California	7 hours	Instruction must include detailed knowledge of the California Child Abuse Neglect and Reporting Act (CANRA). It must also include assessment and methods of reporting of sexual assault, neglect, severe neglect, general neglect, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, corporal punishment or injury, and abuse in out-of-home care. The training shall also include physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, crisis counseling techniques, community resources, rights and responsibilities of reporting, consequences of failure to report, caring for a child's needs after a report is made, sensitivity to previously abused children and adults, and implications and methods of treatment for children and adults.
i) Aging, Long Term Care and Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse, End-of-Life and Grief	10 hours	Instruction must cover aging and long-term care, including biological, social, cognitive and psychological aspects of aging, end-of-life, grief, and instruction on the assessment and reporting of, as well as treatment related to, elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect.

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK REQUIRED PRIOR TO LMFT LICENSURE APPLICANTS WITH AN OUT-OF-STATE OR OUT-OF-COUNTRY DEGREE *(continued)*		
COURSE	**LENGTH**	**CONTENT REQUIRED**
j) Spousal/Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection and Intervention	15 hours	Instruction must cover spousal and partner abuse assessment, detection, intervention strategies, and same-gender abuse dynamics.
k) Multicultural Development and Cross-Cultural Interaction	15 hours or 1 semester unit	Instruction must include experiences of race, ethnicity, class, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender, and disability, and their incorporation into the psychotherapeutic process.
l) Human Sexuality	10 hours	Instruction must include the study of physiological, psychological, and social-cultural variables associated with sexual behavior, sexual dysfunctions, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender dysphoria.
m) Substance Use Disorders	15 hours	See BPC section 4980.81(a)(7).
n) Co-Occurring Disorders and Addiction	15 hours	See BPC section 4980.81(a)(7).
o) Miscellaneous Content	No specific number of hours required, but content must be adequately covered within the applicant's coursework	Instruction must include: • Childbirth, child rearing, parenting and step-parenting • Marriage, divorce and blended families • Cultural factors relevant to abuse of partners and family members • Poverty and deprivation • Financial and social stress • Effects of trauma • The psychological, psychotherapeutic, community and health implications of the matters and life events that arise in marriage and family relationships within a variety of California cultures.