

TITLE 27
LEGISLATIVE RULE
BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN COUNSELING

SERIES 8
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST LICENSING RULE

§27-8-1. General.

1.1. Scope. -- This rule establishes standards for marriage and family therapists to follow in applying, qualifying, and maintaining licensure as a marriage and family therapist.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code §§30-31-5 and 30-31-6.

1.3. Filing Date. – April 14, 2026.

1.4. Effective Date. – April 14, 2026.

1.5. Sunset Provision – This rule will terminate and have no further force or effect on August 1, 2031.

§27-8-2. Definitions.

2.1. The following definitions apply to all rules promulgated by the Board of Examiners in Counseling unless the word or term is explicitly defined or used in a different manner.

2.2. “Application” means an application, providing all required information via a modality approved by the Board, including all supporting documentation and the fee, that is filed with the Board as instructed.

2.3. “Marriage and family therapy” means the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders whether cognitive, affective, or behavioral, specifically within the context of marriage and family systems, that involve the professional application of theories and techniques to individuals, couples, and families, singly or in groups.

2.4. “Marriage and family therapy work experience” means the applicant’s primary professional responsibility that was in direct provision of marriage and family therapy services or indirect services, including direct or indirect marriage and family therapist supervision, approved by the Board.

2.5. “Direct supervision” means face to face or secured interactive contact such as telephone, video, or other contact that clearly addresses the required specialty areas as cited in subdivision 6.1.a. of this rule.

2.6. “Indirect supervision” means review of written reports, case notes, test data and/or any review of representation of supervised marriage and family therapist’s work.

2.7. “Endorsement Licensure for Independent Clinical Practice” means being fully licensed at the highest level in a state or jurisdiction, whereby the licensee’s scope of practice includes the ability to assess, diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders without being under the direct supervision of another licensed mental health professional.

2.8. “Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist -Associate (LMFTA)” – a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Associate, is qualified to diagnosis and treat mental and emotional disorders, whether cognitive, affective or behavioral, specifically within the context of marriage and family systems, that involve the professional application of theories and techniques to individuals, couples and families, singularly or in groups while under the supervision of a Board qualified supervisor.

§27-8-3. Requirements for Application.

3.1. The applicant shall submit, a licensure application containing the following information, before the Board considers the applicant for licensure:

3.1.1. An application completed within six (6) months prior to submission via a modality approved by the Board;

3.1.2. A non-refundable application fee pursuant to 27CSR9 by credit/debit card, check or money order payable to West Virginia Board of Examiners in Counseling (WVBEC);

3.1.3. Official graduate transcripts sent directly from a college university, or clearinghouse;

3.1.4. Two (2) completed professional recommendation forms from Master or Doctoral level individuals licensed as marriage and family therapists, professional counselors, psychologists, social workers, or psychiatrists on a form provided by the Board. The forms need to be dated within six (6) months prior to the submission of the application. Persons with a temporary license may not complete the recommendation form;

3.1.5. Three (3) personal reference letters to satisfy the Board that the applicant is of good moral character and merits public trust. The letter’s author may not be the same person completing a recommendation form. The letters must be dated within six (6) months prior to submission of the application. The Board does not provide a form for this purpose;

3.1.6. A supervisor’s registration contract submitted on a form provided by the Board. The proposed professional supervisor shall meet the requirements of subdivision 6.2.f. of this rule; and,

3.1.7. Verification of supervision forms. These forms shall document the supervised therapy experience, including quarterly reports, supervisor’s midpoint and final verification and assessment form (SVA). These forms are provided by the Board.

3.2. Fees pursuant to 27CSR9 associated with the application process are non-refundable.

3.3. Applicants who have passed an examination shall submit proof of a passing score for approval by the Board. A passing score is valid for five (5) years from the date of examination. An applicant may submit a licensure application prior to obtaining a passing score on certification exam.

3.4. For applicants who have not passed an examination, they shall file a completed licensure application with the Board office prior to taking the Board approved exam. The exam may be taken only after the Board determines that the applicant is eligible for licensure.

3.5 Documentation more than three (3) years or older, to include supervision, shall not be considered towards current licensing efforts. Up to 500 supervision hours completed in another state of jurisdiction may be considered for licensing with proof provided at the time of application.

§27-8-4. Requirements for examination and examination failure.

4.1. The examination required for licensure as a marriage and family therapist is the “Examination in Marital and Family Therapy” offered by the “Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards” (AMFTRB) or an exam approved by the Board.

4.2. An applicant may sit for an approved examination within a twelve-month period, making three (3) attempts without requiring additional permission from the Board.

4.3. An applicant who fails the examination three (3) times must reapply for licensure in accordance with §27-8-3 qualifications.

§27-8-5. Requirements for Endorsement Licensure.

5.1. An individual may apply for endorsement review if the individual is currently licensed in another state or jurisdiction. The licensing requirements of the endorsing state shall be equal to or greater than the requirements in this rule as determined by the Board.

5.2. To be eligible for licensure for independent practice in the state of West Virginia as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist by Endorsement, an applicant must be currently licensed at the highest level of licensure for independent clinical practice regardless of the criteria at the time of initial licensure in the originating state.

5.2.1. The following documentation is required for the Board to consider the applicant for endorsement:

5.2.1.a. A completed West Virginia application;

5.2.1.b. The appropriate fee pursuant to 27CSR9.

5.3. Applicants applying as an endorsement applicant shall provide the following:

5.3.1. Proof of good standing in all jurisdictions where licensed, current, or otherwise, with proof of no discipline in any jurisdictions for an act that would have constituted grounds for refusal, suspension, or revocation of a license to practice marriage and family therapy in the state of West Virginia at the time the act was committed, to include pending actions or investigations; and

5.3.2. Verification of licensure standing from all states or jurisdictions where currently licensed.

5.4. Fees pursuant to 27CSR9 associated with the application process are non-refundable.

5.5. After an application is voided, the applicant may submit a new application with all required documentation and the applicable fee pursuant to 27CSR9.

§27-8-6. Qualifications for New Applicants.

6.1. Education: The education requirements for the licensure of applicants are set forth in W. Va. Code §30-31-9. To meet those requirements, an applicant shall have one (1) of the following degrees:

6.1.1. A master's or doctoral degree from an institution with a program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) or a comparable accrediting body as determined by the Board. Applicants shall complete a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate course work inclusive of a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy. Pertaining to the educational requirements, a degree in marriage and family therapy shall meet all the following criteria, as determined by the Board:

6.1.1.a. The program or concentration must clearly be identified as marriage and family therapy. Such a program must specify in pertinent institutional catalogues and brochures its intent to educate and train marriage and family therapists;

6.1.1.b. The marriage and family therapy curriculum must stand as a recognized entity within the institution and have a marriage and family therapy faculty;

6.1.1.c. The marriage and family therapy coursework completed must be an organized course of study that includes at least one three-hour graduate course in each of these eight (8) areas of marriage and family therapy:

6.1.1.c.1. Marriage and family studies: Courses in this area should present a fundamental introduction to marriage and family studies. The student should learn to think across a wide variety of family structures and a diverse range of issues (i.e., gender, culture, and substance abuse). Topic areas may include but are not limited to family development, subsystems, blended families, gender issues in families, and cultural issues in families;

6.1.1.c.2. Systems theory: Courses in this area should address the historical development, theoretical and empirical foundations, and contemporary conceptual directions of the field of marriage and family therapy;

6.1.1.c.3. Research: Courses in this area should assist the student in understanding and performing research. Topic areas may include research methodology, qualitative and quantitative methods, and statistics;

6.1.1.c.4. Professional ethics: Courses in this area shall include the "American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy" (AAMFT) Code of Ethics, confidentiality and liabilities of clinical practice and research, professional ethics as a marriage and family therapist, professional socialization and the role of the professional organization, licensure or certification legislation, independent practice and inter professional cooperation. Religious ethics courses and moral theology courses do not meet this requirement;

6.1.1.c.5. Human growth and development: Courses in this area should provide knowledge of personality development and its normal and abnormal manifestations. The student should have relevant coursework in human development across the lifespan, which includes special issues that should be integrated with systems concepts. Topic areas may include but are not limited to human development, psychopathology, personality theory, human sexuality. Test and measurement courses do not meet this requirement;

6.1.1.c.6. Appraisal of individuals and families includes individual and family differences, methods of data gathering and interpretation, individual, family and group testing, and case study;

6.1.1.c.7. Principles of etiology, assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and prevention of mental and emotional disorders and dysfunctional behavior; and,

6.1.1.c.8. Practicum: Includes supervised training experience consisting of the provision of marriage and family therapy to clients that is acceptable to the Board;

6.1.1.c.8.A. A minimum of twelve months supervised clinical practicum with 300 hours of direct contact with individuals, couples, and or families;

6.1.1.c.8.B. Fifty percent (50%) of the 300 hours shall be with couples and families present.

6.1.1.d. The marriage and family therapy coursework completed shall include four (4) courses in marriage and family therapy. Courses in this area should have a major focus on advanced marital or family systems and systemic therapeutic interventions. This area is intended to provide a substantive understanding of the major theories of system change and the applied practices evolving from each theoretical orientation. Major theoretical approaches include but are not limited to strategic, structural, object relations, behavioral, intergenerational, and systemic sex therapy.

6.1.1.e. Additional or advanced courses in any required curriculum category listed in subdivisions 6.1.a(3) and 6.1.a(4) of this rule or sufficient semester credit hour courses that are marriage and family-related elective subjects to equal the semester credit hour course requirements as outlined in subsections 6.1.a(3) and 6.1.a(4) of this rule.

6.1.2. Applicants with other graduate degrees in a mental health field that contain 60 semester hours, or 90 quarter hours must submit written evidence that the degree program and any additional coursework meet standards that are equivalent to a graduate degree in marriage and family therapy set forth in paragraphs 6.1.a(3) and 6.1.a(4) of this rule.

6.1.3. The credentialing committee, composed of two (2) counselor educators, Executive Director and other Board staff, shall review all matters regarding education requirements. The marriage and family board member may attend credentialing committee meetings at their discretion or when requested by the committee. The credentialing committee may make a final determination regarding the sufficiency of the applicant's education or may refer the matter to the entire Board for determination. Any determination made by the committee or Board may be appealed in accordance with the procedures set forth in 27CSR5 of the Board's rules.

6.2. Supervised post-graduate work experience: The applicant shall have a minimum of 3000 hours of supervised marriage and family therapy experience, after earning a master's degree in

marriage and family therapy as determined by the Board; or have earned a doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy as determined by the Board and have a minimum of 1500 hours of supervised marriage and family therapy experience after earning the degree.

6.2.1. The applicant may receive up to 600 hours credit toward the 3000-hour minimum requirement in subsection 6.2 of this rule for the work completed in their practicum and internship from their master's program. The credentialing committee shall determine the number of hours that may be granted. There is no credit hours granted for the doctoral supervision hour requirement.

6.2.1.a. The master's level marriage and family therapy work experience shall be obtained in no less than two (2) years, and the doctoral degree marriage and family therapy work experience shall be obtained in no less than one (1) year.

6.2.1.b. The Board may not credit an applicant with more than 1500 hours of experience in any twelve (12) month period.

6.2.1.c. At least 50% of the supervised marriage and family therapy experiences shall be in the direct provision of therapy to individuals, couples, and/or families.

6.2.1.c.1. Applicants should apply systemic theories and treatment with all clients and make every effort to work with as many couples and families as possible. At least 50% of the 1500 hours in subdivision 6.2.c. of this rule shall be with couples and families present.

6.2.1.d. The applicant shall remain under professional supervision satisfactorily to the Board and may not be called a licensed marriage and family therapist, or in any way be represented as a licensed marriage and family therapist, until the applicant is licensed by the Board.

6.2.1.e. The professional supervisor shall determine the applicant's activities. A minimum of one (1) hour of direct individual supervision is required for every 20 hours of practice unless the professional supervisor considers additional supervision is necessary. When the professional supervisor is not a full-time employee of the same practice or agency as the applicant, the supervision shall occur at least twice in each calendar month while maintaining the minimum hourly requirement, unless the professional supervisor considers additional supervision is necessary. The supervisor shall be reasonably available to the applicant for consultation. An approved professional supervisor may not supervise more than four (4) individual applicants but may have additional supervisees (no more than eight (8) total) with prior Board approval. Supervision can be conducted in-person or via any secured, encrypted telecommunication modality.

6.2.1.f. The professional supervisor shall be pre-approved by the Board and shall provide post-graduate degree supervision for applicants provided they are a licensed marriage and family therapist or licensed professional counselor. At a minimum, the professional supervisor shall have been licensed for a period of two (2) years and shall have five (5) years therapy/counseling experience. The professional supervisor shall document to the Board that they have a current license, has completed Board approved training in therapy/counseling supervision that includes content and experiences relevant to the professional of clinical supervision of marriage and family therapists, and has completed the jurisprudence exam directed by the Board. The professional supervisor shall provide the Board with a statement detailing their therapy philosophy, supervision experience and therapy experience. The professional supervisor shall demonstrate a stable employment history and skills necessary to address core areas of practice as outlined in subdivision 6.1.a of this rule and the AAMFT Code of Ethics.

6.2.1.f.1. The training in therapy/counseling supervision in subdivision 6.2.g. of this rule shall be one of the following:

6.2.1.f.2. Successful completion of a one (1) semester graduate course in marriage and family therapy clinical supervision from an accredited institution; or

6.2.1.f.3. A 30-hour continuing education course in clinical supervision offered by a board approved provider.

6.2.1.g. In lieu of meeting the qualifications set forth in subdivision 6.2.g. of this rule, a licensed mental health professional is an acceptable professional supervisor if the licensed mental health professional has been designated as an approved supervisor by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) before the licensed mental health professional provides supervision.

6.2.1.h. The applicant shall provide the Board with verification of completion of supervised marriage and family therapy experience with successful endorsement from the ALPS (supervisor). If the ALPS does not endorse the applicant, additional supervision may be required.

6.3. Standardized certification examination in marriage and family therapy: The applicant shall provide the Board with verification that they have attained a successful score on a certification examination in marriage and family therapy approved by the Board. The successful score is valid for five (5) years from the date of examination.

§27-8-7. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist-Associate.

7.1. An applicant shall obtain a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist-Associate license before the applicant begins the supervisory experience. Hours obtained by an unlicensed person in any setting shall not count toward the supervised experience requirements.

7.2. The Board shall issue a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist-Associate license to an applicant who:

7.2.1. has filed a licensure application in accordance with subsection 3.1 of this rule;

7.2.2. has met all the licensure requirements, including the academic requirements in section 6 of this rule; and passed the required examination in section 6.3 of this rule;

7.2.3. has signed a statement, included in the application, that the applicant has read and understands the AAMFT Code of Ethics, and the board rules as defined in this Series;

7.3. Any applicant with post-degree supervision hours completed and documented in another state may have those supervision hours considered by the Board toward the supervision requirements in this state if the supervisory requirements for licensure are equal to or greater than this Board's supervisory requirements and are provided at the time the application is submitted.

7.4. Supervision during the associate licensing period shall be continuous, and any interruption in supervision of more than six (6) weeks shall be reported to the Board, in writing, within 30 days of the

interruption. Interruptions not reported in a timely manner may result in termination of the associate license or other disciplinary action or sanctions as determined appropriately by the Board.

7.5. The Board must be notified in writing of any changes in supervision, to include change of Board approved supervisor and/or job positions, and the changes approved before the change(s) occur. Failure to obtain approval of such changes will nullify any hours accrued between the termination of one supervisor and/or job change and the approval of the other.

7.6. Associate licensed marriage and family therapists may not own, operate, or function as an independent contractor (1099) of a private practice and must practice only as part of their licensure supervisory requirement as outlined in subsection 6.2 of this rule.

7.7. An associate license is valid for 36 months. An associate licensee who does not complete the supervised therapy experience during the 36-month licensure period may renew their associate license once for an additional 24 months by written request and payment of a fee equal to the current initial application fee.

§27-8-8. Issuance of License.

8.1 A license authorizing the holder to engage in the practice of marriage and family therapy shall be issued by the Board to each successful applicant for licensure as a marriage and family therapist.

8.2 Each license issued by the Board shall contain the licensee's name, license number, the date of issuance and a statement indicating the license expiration date of June 30.

8.3 Official licenses shall be signed, in person or electronically, by the Chairperson and Secretary of the Board, and be affixed with the official seal of the Board.

8.4 All licenses issued by the Board remain the property of the Board and shall be surrendered upon demand.

8.5 Once all requirements for licensure have been determined, the Board shall send notification of the license to the applicant's last known email address.

§27-8-9. Professional Disclosure.

9.1. A licensee shall display a professional disclosure statement at the place where they perform services and make a copy of the statement available to clients upon request. The Board shall provide the professional disclosure statement form when a license is originally issued. A licensee may obtain additional forms through the Board office or website.

9.2. The following information shall be included in the professional disclosure statement:

9.2.1. The name, title, business address, and business phone number of the licensee performing the service;

9.2.2. The formal professional education of the licensee, including academic degrees, the institutions awarding those degrees and the dates they were received;

9.2.2.a. Formal professional education means the licensee's academic training related to marriage and family therapy which meets the educational requirements for licensure as a marriage and family therapist; and,

9.2.2.b. Academic degrees that do not meet the requirements for licensure are not formal professional education as defined in this Rule and shall not be listed.

9.2.3. The licensee's areas of competence in marriage and family and the services they provide are as follows (as is appropriate): The practice of marriage and family therapy and the delivery of those services are defined in sections §27-8-2.3. of this rule. The marriage and family therapist areas of competence and services are required to be listed on the professional statement; and

9.2.4. The Board's name, current address, and telephone number. The following statement shall appear just above the Board's information: Any questions, concerns or complaints relating to the delivery of service by the marriage and family therapist listed above may be directed to.

9.3. The following legal and ethical principles apply to the licensee in providing this disclosure statement:

9.3.1. The provision of the professional disclosure statement is the sole responsibility of the licensee. The licensee shall submit a copy of the professional disclosure statement to the Board;

9.3.2. The purpose of professional disclosure is to provide sufficient information to aid the consumer public in making informed judgments and choices on matters that concern it; and,

9.3.3. Areas of competence and services provided listed on the professional disclosure statement shall not exceed those professional qualifications possessed.

9.4. In listing areas of competence and services provided on the professional disclosure statement, the licensee shall adhere to the scope of practice of marriage and family therapy and delivery of services as defined in W. Va. Code §30-31-3(g), and as cited in Section 9 of this rule.

§27-8-10. Code of Ethics.

10.1. The Board adopts the current version of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's Code of Ethics as part of this rule and all provisions of the Code of Ethics have the effect as if it were a specifically promulgated rule of the Board.

10.2. The Board may take disciplinary action against a licensee who fails to comply with the Code of Ethics cited in subsection 10.1. of this rule.

§27-8-11. Responsibilities of Licensees.

11.1. Licensees shall familiarize themselves with the most current provisions of the W. Va. Code 30-31-1 et seq, the Code of Ethics of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and practice therapy in accordance with the law and all rules promulgated by the Board.

11.2. A licensee shall notify the Board within 30 days of any change of their legal name, primary address, telephone number, email address or similar change of location or status via a modality approved by the Board.

11.3. A licensee shall notify the Board in writing within 30 days of witnessing what may constitute, in their best judgment, professional misconduct by another marriage and family therapist.

§27-8-12. Expired License.

12.1 A person whose license has expired and who continues to hold themselves out as a licensed marriage and family therapist or who engages in marriage and family therapy without a license is in violation of W. Va. Code 30-31-1.

§27-8-13. Relations with the Public and Other Professions.

13.1. A licensee shall neither misrepresent nor accept misrepresentation by other persons of the efficacy of their professional services.

13.2. A licensee shall not, under normal circumstances, offer professional services to clients already receiving services from another professional, unless agreed upon by all parties.

13.3. A licensee shall not distribute advertisements, announcements, or information that is false, inaccurate, misleading, partial, out of context, or deceptive.

13.4. A licensee shall clearly state their licensure status using the title "Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist or "LMFT" in all professional correspondence, documents, advertisements, and announcements.

13.5. A licensee shall display their original current license certificate and disclosure statement in a prominent place in the primary location of their practice.

13.6. A licensee shall distinguish between public statements made as a private citizen and those made as a representative of the profession and be aware that any statement they make may be interpreted as being representative of their profession.

13.7. A licensee shall not give or accept a commission, rebate, or other form of remuneration for referral of clients for professional services.

§27-8-14. Violations of Child Support.

14.1. The Board shall revoke or suspend the license of a licensee or impose other sanctions against a licensee or refuse to renew a license or approve an application for license, after receiving a valid circuit court order indicating that the licensee has violated a child support ruling and, as a result, has endangered his or her professional license.

14.2. The Board shall reinstate, remove sanctions against or allow renewal of or application for a license after receiving a valid circuit court order to reinstate or renew a license previously suspended, revoked or sanctioned because of a similar order of the court.

§27-8-15. Retirement Status

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15.1. Before the Board may consider the licensee for retirement status, the licensee shall submit, no sooner than two (2) weeks prior to June 30 of every even numbered year, a retirement application packet, in a format designated by the Board, containing all the following information:

15.1.1. A completed retirement status application on a form provided by the board; and,

15.1.2. A copy of the recording form documenting all the individual continuing education offerings completed by the licensee on a form provided by the board; and,

15.1.3. Copies of all certificates of completion corresponding with the documentation provided on the recording form; and,

15.1.4. The appropriate fee, as set forth in 27CSR9 MFT Fee Rules.

15.2. Upon approval for the retirement status designation, the licensee in Retirement Status (LMFT-R) shall only work in a voluntary position for renewal of the retired licensee;

15.2.1. Shall complete 20 contact hours each renewal cycle;

15.2.2. Shall complete three (3) of the 20 contact hours in Ethics based on the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's Code of Ethics;

15.2.3. May complete all 20 contact hours in home study including the ethics; and,

15.2.4. Shall pay the appropriate fee, as set forth in, §27-9, LMFT Fee Rules.

§27-8-16. Inactive Status.

16.1. Inactive status shall only be granted to licenses in good-standing and meeting additional requirements as outlined by the Board.

16.1.1. The licensee shall submit to the Board a completed inactive status application on a form provided by the board with the fee, prior to June 16 of the year the application is being submitted;

16.1.2. A copy of the recording form documenting all individual continuing education offerings completed by the licensee on a form provided by the board when applicable.

16.1.3. Copies of all certificates of completion corresponding with the documentation provided on the recording form when applicable; and,

16.1.4. The appropriate fee, as set forth in, 27CSR9 LMFT Fee Rules.

16.2. Upon approval for the inactive status designation, the LMFT in inactive Status (LMFT-I) may NOT provide counseling services of any kind.

16.2.1. The licensee is NOT required to obtain continuing education credits during approved inactive status period;

16.2.2. Shall complete 35 hours of continuing education credits in the two (2) years proceeding an application to return to active status;

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16.2.3. Shall complete three (3) of the 35 continuing education credits in Ethics based on the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's Code of Ethics;

16.2.4. Shall complete two (2) of the 20 continuing education credits required in mental health conditions specific to veterans and family members of veterans as cited in 27CSR3, Renewal Rule section.;

16.2.5. For a license that is inactive for more than five (5) years, to return to active status, you may be subject to additional continuing education, supervision and/or completion of additional course work, and;

16.2.6. Shall pay the appropriate fee, as set forth in, 27CSR9 LMFT Fee Rules.