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Application Process to Apply for Initial Licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist

The Rules and Regulations can be located on the Board’s website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social.

These FAQs are not intended to substitute for reading the Rules and Regulations.

Q: Are the State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors (Board), Board Counsel and/or the Board Administrator and Board Staff permitted to provide legal advice?

A: No. Neither the Board’s Act nor regulations confer authority on the Board to issue advisory opinions, provide legal advice to outside persons or entities, pre-determine whether or what type of authorization to practice is required in order to be able to lawfully engage in an activity, or otherwise pre-approve/disapprove specific conduct. If you have a legal question, you should confer with a privately retained attorney.

Q: What is legal advice?

A: Legal advice is any written or oral counsel regarding a legal matter that impacts the responsibilities and rights of the person who receives it. Legal advice includes advisory opinions and interpretation of statutes or law.

Q: Can I provide teletherapy to clients in Pennsylvania or any other state?

A: The Board does not currently have regulations on teletherapy. However, the Board does require licensure when providing services in the State of Pennsylvania. If the person is physically located outside of the state at the time the services are being rendered, you would need to contact the state where the individual is located. You can also check with your national association (AAMFT) as the Board does expect its licensees to act in accordance with the code of ethics and practice standards of that organization.

Q: Does the Board issue a temporary license to practice in the state of Pennsylvania if I am licensed in another state?

A: No. Neither the Board’s Act nor regulations allow the Board to issue a temporary license to licensees from another state to practice in the State of Pennsylvania. However, if an applicant submits an application for licensure by endorsement under Act 41, they may be granted a provisional license at the discretion of the Board.

Q: What is Act 76 of 2018?

A: Act 76 of 2018 prohibits the independent practice of clinical social work, marriage and family therapy and professional counseling without a license as a clinical social worker (LCSW), marriage and family therapist (LMFT), or professional counselor (LPC). “Independent practice” means that the individual 1) styles themselves as a clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist or professional counselor; 2) regulates and is responsible for his or her own practice and treatment procedures; and 3) is not affiliated with any other practice, health care facility, government agency or government-regulated social service agency.

Licensed marriage and family therapists in independent clinical practice who, *prior to October 27, 2018*, began actively working towards licensure as a marriage and family therapist by accumulating the required 3,000 hours of “supervised clinical experience” as

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set forth in the Board’s regulations at 49 Pa. Code § 48.13(b) are not considered to be engaging in “independent practice” and will be permitted to complete their experience requirements for licensure as a marriage and family therapist and to obtain the marriage and family therapist license.

These marriage and family therapists must have been receiving the necessary supervision by a supervisor who meets the Board’s regulations in “Qualifications for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 49.3 and the “Standards for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 48.13. These practitioners must continue to receive the required supervision until they are issued a license to practice marriage and family therapy by the Board.

Q: Did Act 76 change the scope of practice for marriage and family therapists?

A: Yes. Please review Section 3 of the Board’s Act which defines Practice of Marriage and Family Therapy to see the current scope of practice of marriage and family therapists.

Q: Under Act 76, am I permitted to engage in independent practice if I completed my education to obtain a license to practice marriage and family therapy and I am working towards completing the 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience?

A: Refer to Section 3 of the Board’s Act for the definition of independent practice.

Those practitioners who have completed their education to obtain a license to practice marriage and family therapy and who are actively working toward licensure as a marriage and family therapist by accumulating the required 3,000 of “supervised clinical experience” as set forth in the Board’s regulations at 49 Pa. Code § 48.13(b) are not considered to be engaging in “independent practice” as defined in Act 76 of 2018 if they are receiving regular supervision by a supervisor, on or before October of 2018, who meets the Board’s regulations on “Qualifications for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 48.3 and the “Standards for Supervisors” as outlined in 49 Pa. Code § 48.14. These practitioners must continue to receive the required supervision until they are issued a license to practice marriage and family therapy by the Board.

Q: Where can I find the application for licensure as a marriage and family therapist?

A: You will need to apply for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. You will need to register and then you will be able to log in and apply for the license.

Q: How do I know if my education meets Pennsylvania’s requirements?

A: You must meet **ONE** of the following education requirements under Section 7(e) (2) Act 136 – 1998--on website www.dos.state.pa.us/social , click on Rules and Regulations, Chapter 48 (Licensure of Marriage and Family Therapists

a. Has successfully completed a planned program of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate coursework which is closely related to marriage and family therapy, including a master’s degree granted on or before June 30, 2009, in marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution or a master’s degree granted on or before June 30, 2009, in a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution, with graduate level coursework in marriage and family

therapy acceptable to the board from an accredited educational institution or from a program recognized by a national accrediting agency, and has met specific course requirements listed in Section 48.2.

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ATTENTION APPLICANTS WITH LESS THAN A 48 SEMESTER OR 72 QUARTER HOURS MASTER’S DEGREE IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY OR A RELATED FIELD:

An applicant with less than a 48 semester or 72 quarter hours master’s degree may qualify for licensure if the master’s degree was completed on or before June 30, 2009. The additional hours needed to reach the required 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours in marriage and family therapy or a related field may be completed after the granting of the master’s degree. Please be aware that the master’s degree must be from an accredited educational institution, with graduate level coursework in marriage and family therapy from an accredited institution or from a program recognized by a national accrediting agency.

- b. Has successfully completed a planned program of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate coursework which is closely related to marriage and family therapy, including a 48-semester-hour or 72-quarter-hour master’s degree in marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution or a 48-semester-hour or 72-quarter-hour master’s degree in a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution, with graduate level course work in marriage and family therapy acceptable to the board from an accredited educational institution or from a program recognized by a national accrediting agency and has met specific course requirements listed in Section 48.2.
- c. Holds a doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution or holds a doctoral degree in a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution with graduate level coursework in marriage and family therapy acceptable to the board from an accredited educational institution or from a program recognized by a national accrediting agency and has met specific course requirements listed in Section 48.2.

Q: What coursework must my degree contain?

A: The following coursework is required as per Section 48.2 of the regulations (the regulations may be located on the Board’s website at www.dos.state.pa.us/social):

- (1) **Human development** (3 courses minimum-9 semester or 12 quarter or 135 didactic contact hours).
 - (i) Courses in this area shall provide knowledge of individual personality development and its normal abnormal manifestations.
 - (ii) Coursework shall cover human development across the life span, including special issues that affect an individual’s development (that is, culture, gender and human sexuality).
- (2) **Marriage and family studies** (3 courses minimum-9 semester or 12 quarter or 135 didactic contact hours). Courses in this area shall be a fundamental introduction to family systems theory.
- (3) **Marriage and family therapy** (3 courses minimum-9 semester or 12 quarter or 135 didactic contact hours).
 - (i) Courses in this area shall have a major focus on family systems theory and systemic therapeutic interventions.
 - (ii) This area shall provide a substantive understanding of the major theories of systems change and the applied practices evolving from each theoretical orientation.

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- (4) **Professional studies** (1 course minimum-3 semester or 4 quarter or 45 didactic contact hours).
 - (i) Courses in this area shall contribute to the professional development of the therapist.
 - (ii) Areas of study shall include the therapist’s legal responsibilities and liabilities, professional ethics as a marriage and family therapist, professional socialization, and the role of the professional organization, licensure or certification legislation, independent practice and interprofessional cooperation.
- (5) **Research** (1 course minimum-3 semester or 4 quarter or 45 didactic contact hours). Courses in this area shall assist students in understanding and performing research.
- (6) **Practicum** (minimum 1 years, 300 hours of supervised direct client contact with individuals, couples and families). (1 year is equal to 3 semesters).

Q: I hold less than a 48-semester credit or 72 quarter credit master’s degree. Am I eligible for licensure?

A: Yes, only if you have successfully completed a planned program of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate coursework which is closely related to marriage and family therapy, including a master’s degree granted on or before June 30, 2009, in marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution or a master’s degree granted on or before June 30, 2009, in a field determined by the board by regulation to be closely related to the practice of marriage and family therapy from an accredited educational institution, with graduate level coursework in marriage and family therapy acceptable to the board from an accredited educational institution or from a program recognized by a national accrediting agency, and has met specific course requirements listed in Section 48.2.

(ATTENTION APPLICANTS WITH LESS THAN A 48 SEMESTER OR 72 QUARTER HOURS MASTER’S DEGREE IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY OR A RELATED FIELD:

An applicant with less than a 48 semester or 72 quarter hours master’s degree may qualify for licensure if the master’s degree was completed on or before June 30, 2009. The additional hours needed to reach the required 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours in marriage and family therapy or a related field may be completed after the granting of the master’s degree. Please be aware that the master’s degree must be from an accredited educational institution, with graduate level coursework in marriage and family therapy from an accredited institution or from a program recognized by a national accrediting agency.

Q: When may I begin accruing my 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience?

A: *As of October 27, 2018*, Act 76 requires an applicant for licensure as a marriage and family therapist or for licensure as a professional counselor to complete at least 3,000 hours of “supervised clinical experience” AFTER being granted a master’s degree. Prior to the enactment of Act 76 of 2018, supervised clinical experience could be accumulated after the completion of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours of graduate coursework.

An individual who has met the educational requirements of Section 48.13(a)(3)(i) or (ii), as a marriage and family therapist and has started accruing their 3,000 hours of “supervised clinical experience” after the completion of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours of graduate level coursework, *but prior to Act 76’s effective date on October 27, 2018*, will be permitted to continue their supervised clinical experience towards licensure and to obtain a license as a marriage and family therapist. Please be advised that the

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practicum requirement of Section 48.2(6) of the Board’s regulations *cannot* be counted toward the 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience.

An individual pursuing licensure as a marriage and family therapist that has not started accruing their supervised clinical experience hours *prior to the effective date of Act 76 on October 27, 2018*, will need to obtain their master’s degree prior to accruing the 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience.

Q: How many hours of supervised clinical experience are required and how long do I have to complete my hours for licensure as a marriage and family therapist?

A: 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience are required. Under Section 48.13(b)(9) of the regulations; **the supervised clinical experience shall be completed in no less than 2 years and no more than 6 years.** (The Board has waived the requirement that states except that no less than 500 hours and no more than 1,800 hours may be credited in any 12-month period.)

Q: How many clinical hours per week must I work for the supervised clinical experience to be accepted?

A: Under Section 48.13(b)(8) of the regulations; supervised work activity will be counted toward satisfying the experience requirement only

- if it takes place in a single setting for at least **30** hours per week but no more than 50 hours per week during at least a 3-month period
- OR at least **15** hours per week for a period of at least 6 months.

Q: How many hours per week must I meet with my supervisor?

A: Under Section 48.13(b)(5) of the regulations; the supervisor, or one to whom supervisory responsibilities have been delegated, shall meet with the supervisee for a minimum of 2 hours for every 40 hours of supervised clinical experience. At least 1 of the 2 hours shall be with the supervisee individually and in person, and 1 of the 2 hours may be with the supervisee in a group setting and in person. A total of 150 hours of supervision must be completed. At least 75 hours must be individual supervision and the other 75 hours may be group supervision.

Example: For every 40 hours of clinical experience you must have at least 1 hour of individual supervision and 1 hour may be group supervision or individual supervision. Example: If working 20 hours per week – 1 week you must have 1 hour of individual supervision and the next week you may have one hour of group supervision.

Q: How long do I have to complete my 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience?

A: Under Section 48.13(b)(9) of the regulations – The supervised clinical experience shall be completed in no less than 2 years and no more than 6 years. (The Board has waived the requirement that no less than 500 hours and no more than 1,800 hours may be credited in any 12-month period.)

Q: What duties must my supervised clinical experience contain?

A: Under Section 48.13(b)(1) of the regulations: At least 1,500 hours (one-half of the 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience) shall consist of providing services in one or more of the following areas:

- (i) Assessment
- (ii) Couples therapy
- (iii) Family Therapy

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- (iv) Other systems interventions (psycho-education)
- (v) Consultation
- (vi) Individual therapy
- (vii) Group therapy

Please note the above 7 experiences should involve direct client contact. The remainder of the clinical experience must be related to work with clients. **Example: case documentation and recordkeeping activities; court testimony related to work with client(s); advocacy on behalf of client(s); other activities that involve, support or enhance work with clients.**

Please be advised that administrative duties cannot be counted towards the 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience.

Example: administrative supervision of another individual, completing human resource and/or budget documentation, etc.

Please refer to Section 48.13(b) of the regulations for the supervised clinical experience requirements.

Q: What are the qualifications for a supervisor to supervise the 3000 hours of supervised clinical experience?

A: For supervised clinical experience completed after January 1, 2010, 1500 hours must be completed under an individual who holds a current license as a marriage and family therapist and has received certification as an approved supervisor or supervisor-in-training by the AAMFT (Section 48.3(1)) and the 1500 hours may be completed under an individual who holds a current license and has at least a master’s degree in a related field and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years in that field (Section 48.3(2)), as per Section 48.13(b)(2) of the regulations. A related field is defined in Section 48.1 of the regulations.

For supervised clinical experience completed prior to January 1, 2010, 1500 hours must be completed either under an individual who holds a current license as a marriage and family therapist and has received certification as an approved supervisor or supervisor-in-training by the AAMFT (Section 48.3(1)) OR under an individual who practiced as a marriage and family therapist, has completed a 1-semester graduate course in marriage and family therapy supervision (at least 30 contact hours) or the equivalent and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years as a marriage and family therapist (Section 48.3(3)). The other 1500 hours may be completed under an individual who holds a current license and has at least a master’s degree in a related field and has 5 years of experience within the last 10 years in that field (Section 48.3(2)), as per Section 48.13(b)(2) of the regulations. A related field is defined in Section 48.1 of the regulations.

Supervised clinical experience completed in another state may be counted towards meeting the Pennsylvania supervised clinical experience requirements as long as the experience meets Pennsylvania requirements.

Please also refer to Section 48.14 of the regulations for the Standards for Supervisors.

Q: What documentation am I required to maintain while I am completing my

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supervised clinical experience?

A: You and your supervisor must maintain records as defined in Section 48.14 (Standards for supervisors). You and your supervisor would devise a form to use to maintain your records. The Board may request these records if it becomes necessary.

Q: How many individuals completing the supervised clinical experience requirements may a supervisor supervise?

A: Under Section 48.13(b)(6) of the regulations – A supervisor shall supervise no more than 6 supervisees at the same time. If this provision creates an undue hardship on a supervisee, the supervisor and supervisee may request an exception to this provision. The request shall state, in writing, the reasons why this provision creates a hardship on the supervisee and why the supervisee is not able to obtain a supervisor who meets the requirements of this provision. **Please be advised that in certain circumstances the Board may require a personal appearance by the supervisee and supervisor.**

Q: If I am unable to locate my supervisor or my supervisor is deceased, how do I have my supervised clinical experience verified?

A: If you do not hold a marriage and family therapy license in another state, you can have another individual who can attest to the fact that the supervised clinical experience has occurred submit the following documentation:

- (1) A notarized statement by the applicant indicating why the supervisor cannot complete the supervised clinical experience forms.
- (2) A notarized statement, by the individual attesting to your supervised clinical experience, indicating how that individual can verify that the supervised clinical experience occurred and indicating why that individual is completing the supervised clinical experience forms instead of your supervisor.
- (3) The supervised clinical experience forms, completed by the individual attesting to your supervised clinical experience, indicating your supervisor’s name and qualifications and all other documentation.

If you hold a marriage and family therapy license in another state, you may request that copies of the supervised clinical experience on file with the other State Board be forwarded to the PA State Board for review.

Q: What is Act 41?

A: Act 41 is an alternative path to licensure by endorsement for people licensed in good standing in another state if they don’t meet the Board’s current endorsement requirements. It states that the Board SHALL issue a license if a licensee (1) holds a current license from another state whose licensure requirements are substantially equivalent to or exceed the requirements established in the Commonwealth (2) demonstrates competency in the profession through methods determined by the Board such as CE or been in practice for 2 of the last 5 years preceding the date of the application (3) has not committed any act that constitutes grounds for refusal, suspension or revocation of a license unless the board determines that the act should not be an impediment to licensure (4) is in good standing in the other jurisdiction and (5) pays fees established by the licensing board.

Q: I am licensed in another state as a marriage and family therapist. What is the procedure for licensure under Act 41?

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A: You will need to for the license on-line at www.pals.pa.gov. Please note that you must hold a license in good standing as a marriage and family therapist in another state and have been actively engaged in the practice of marriage and family therapy for 2 of the last 5 years in any state or territory in the United States immediately preceding the filing of this application for licensure by endorsement under Act 41. All applicants from another country will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Are marriage and family therapists permitted to write Emotional Support Animal Requests?

A: A marriage and family therapist must work within their scope of practice as defined in Section 3 of the law and may only provide services that are within the competency areas for which an individual is qualified by education, training and experience. Please refer to the Code of Ethics in Section 48.72(a)(2)