



# IMPORTANT ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FOR ASSOCIATE MARRIAGE AND  
FAMILY THERAPISTS AND MFT TRAINEES



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DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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# Associate Marriage and Family Therapists and MFT Trainees Frequently Asked Questions

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The information provided in this publication is supplemental and is intended to serve as a quick answer guide for common questions for those pursuing licensure as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. The Board's [Statutes and Regulations](#) contain the official legal code sections. The Board encourages you to thoroughly read the *Statutes and Regulations* pertaining to the marriage and family therapy profession.

Not a registered Associate yet? Start here: [Handbook for Future LMFTs](#)

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## A. TRAINEE FAQs

See [Section C](#) for more information on supervised experience requirements for Trainees

### 1. Am I required to register as a Trainee with the Board?

No, the Board does not register MFT Trainees.

### 2. What types of settings are Trainees allowed to work in?

Trainees are prohibited from working in a private practice or professional corporation setting. All acceptable settings must comply with all of the following:

- The school in which the Trainee is enrolled must approve the site and have a written agreement with the site that details each party's responsibilities.
- The setting must lawfully and regularly provide mental health counseling or psychotherapy.
- The setting must provide oversight to ensure that the Trainee's work at the setting meets the experience and supervision requirements, and is within the scope of practice for the profession.

*Statutes cited: Business and Professions Code (BPC) sections 4980.42 and 4980.43.3*

### 3. As a Trainee, when can I begin counting pre-degree hours of work experience?

Trainees can only begin counting hours of experience if the student has completed a minimum of 12 semester or 18 quarter units of coursework in a qualifying MFT degree program, and is enrolled in a practicum course.

*Statutes cited: BPC section 4980.03*

### 4. What types of hours can I count as a Trainee?

A Trainee is permitted to earn a maximum of 1,300 hours of experience overall prior to the degree being awarded. Up to 750 hours of counseling (including diagnosing and treating couples, families and children, and individual or group psychotherapy) and supervision are permitted within the 1,300-hour maximum. The remaining 550 hours may only consist of non-clinical experience. For more information about supervised experience types and requirements, see [section C](#).

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43*

## **5. Are Trainees required to be enrolled in practicum in order to counsel clients?**

A Trainee may provide counseling while not enrolled in practicum only if BOTH of the following are met:

- The period of time is less than 90 calendar days AND
- The 90-day (or shorter) period is immediately preceded by enrollment in practicum and immediately followed by enrollment in practicum (or completion of the degree program).

For example, if your practicum course ended on May 29, and you are not taking a summer practicum course, you may see clients for the next 90 days PROVIDED you are enrolled in another practicum course that starts by August 27, or you graduate by August 27.

If a Trainee's practicum break is 90 days or greater, the Trainee cannot count any hours gained during that time period.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980.36 and 4980.42*

## **6. Do I need to be fingerprinted as a Trainee?**

The Board does not require Trainees to be fingerprinted. However, if you graduated on or after January 1, 2020, and you want to count hours under the "90-day rule," then your employer must have had you fingerprinted before you will be allowed to count hours immediately after graduation. See question 8 on the next page for more information.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43*

## B. ASSOCIATE REGISTRATION; LAW AND ETHICS EXAM

### 7. If I want to become dually licensed as an LMFT and LPCC, do I need to register as an Associate for both license types?

Yes, you will need to register as both an AMFT and as an APCC to count hours toward both licenses. See question [43](#) for additional requirements.

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

If the Board receives your application for an Associate registration within 90 days of your degree award date, and you are thereafter issued an Associate registration, all post-degree hours of supervised experience may be credited. Hours gained under this “90-day rule” must comply with all experience and supervision requirements in order to count toward licensure.

#### **For Applicants who Graduated on or After January 1, 2020:**

Hours may only be accepted under the “90-day-rule” described above IF the hours are obtained at a workplace that, prior to the applicant gaining hours, required live scan fingerprinting. You must provide documentation to the Board from your employer consisting of a copy of the processed “State of California Request for Live Scan Service” form. This form must be submitted with your application for licensure for hours gained between graduation and registration issuance to be accepted. A copy of the processed Live Scan form is the ONLY acceptable documentation specified in law. There are no exceptions. See the [FAQ](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs) about the 90-day rule for more information.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43*

### 9. When can I begin working in a private practice or professional corporation?

### 10. Are there any limitations on working in a private practice or professional corporation?

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

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980.43 and 4984.01; Regulation cited: Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 1833*

### 11. What are the requirements to become an Associate?

Please see the [AMFT Registration Application](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs).



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

No. Independent practice cannot begin until you are issued an LMFT license. Independent practice (or opening your own office) is considered unlicensed practice and is subject to disciplinary action by the Board. You are also prohibited from billing clients directly until you are licensed.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980, 4980.10 and 4982*

## 13. When am I required to renew my Associate registration? What must I do to renew?

Registrations expire annually and have a total six (6)-year time limit. Your registration's expiration date will be printed on your registration certificate. You will be mailed a courtesy renewal notice 90 days prior to your expiration date. The Board encourages renewing online as it takes effect instantly as long as all renewal requirements are met.

To qualify for renewal, you must complete 3 hours of continuing education in California Law and Ethics during your renewal cycle (the one-year period prior to your registration's expiration date). See the [Registrant Continuing Education Brochure](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Licensee>Continuing Education>Mandatory Coursework) for more information. In addition, if you have not yet passed the LMFT California Law and Ethics exam, you must take it during your renewal cycle to be permitted to renew.

*Statute cited: BPC sections 4980.54 and 4984.01*

## 14. When do I need to take the Law and Ethics Exam? What happens if I don't take it in time?

Associates who have not yet passed the LMFT California Law and Ethics Exam **MUST** have taken this exam during their renewal cycle in order to renew. There are no exceptions. **It is critical that you apply to take the exam early in your renewal cycle and schedule your exam well in advance of your expiration date to ensure your ability to renew on time.** If you wait until the last minute to take the exam, you risk delaying your ability to renew. Your employer is unlikely to allow you to work with an expired registration, and you won't be able to count any experience hours toward licensure during the time your registration lapsed. Exam applications can take up to 6 weeks for processing. The test administrator may not have immediate test dates available, so be sure to allow enough time for scheduling.

*Statute cited: BPC sections 4980.43 and 4984.01*

## 15. How do I apply to take the California Law and Ethics Exam?

To apply for the exam, download the exam application from the Board's [website](#) and mail it in with the required fee. Allow 4-6 weeks for processing. See the [FAQs](#) about the Law and Ethics Exam for more information (find the above links at [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Exams>LMFT).

## **16. What happens if I don't pass the California Law and Ethics Exam?**

You do not need to pass the exam in order to renew your registration; you just need to have taken it. You may retake the exam after at least 90 days have passed from the date you last took the exam. See the [Request for Re-Examination](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)> Exams>LMFT) for more information.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.399; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1805.05*

## **17. What happens if I haven't passed the Law and Ethics Exam by my registration's 6-year time limit?**

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

*Statute cited: BPC section 4984.01*

## **18. How do I obtain a second or third (subsequent) Associate registration number, and can I count experience gained under a subsequent number?**

## **19. Can I work in a private practice or professional corporation under a subsequent Associate registration number?**

Submit the [AMFT Subsequent Registration](#) application (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)> Applicant>LMFT> Forms/Pubs) with the required fee. Be sure to submit it in advance of your registration's expiration date to allow time for processing and to avoid a lapse in your registration. You may continue to count hours of experience under your subsequent Associate number; however, your hours may only be up to six years old at the time you apply for licensure, as explained in question [24](#).

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

*Statute cited: BPC section 4984.01*

## **20. What happens once I pass the Law and Ethics Exam?**

If you are still earning hours of supervised experience, you will continue as a registrant until you have completed your hours. No further exams are required until you apply for licensure. You may submit your *Application for Licensure* once you have met all education and experience requirements. Upon approval of your *Application for Licensure*, you will be required to take and pass the California Clinical LMFT Exam. Once you have passed the clinical exam, you will submit an *Application for Initial License Issuance* and fee.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980.397 and 4980.399*

## C. EXPERIENCE HOURS, SUPERVISION AND EMPLOYMENT

### 21. What is the breakdown for the required hours of experience to become a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)?

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

The supervised work experience categories break down into just two overall types:

- Direct counseling experience (*Minimum 1,750 hours*)
  - A minimum of 500 of the above 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.

#### **Limitations on Experience Hours:**

- Maximum 1,300 hours gained pre-degree
- Maximum 750 hours of counseling and direct supervisor contact gained pre-degree
- Maximum 40 hours of experience earned in any week between all settings
- Maximum six (6) hours of individual, triadic or group supervision in any week

#### **104 Supervised Weeks Required:**

These 104 weeks must contain both of the following:

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

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

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980.43 and 4980.43.2; Regulation cited: Title 16 CCR section 1833*

## 22. What is triadic supervision?

Triadic supervision is defined as face-to-face supervision consisting of one supervisor and two supervisees. It is counted under the law as equivalent to individual supervision.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.2*

## 23. What is the definition of “telehealth counseling”?

## 24. How many telehealth hours can I gain?

Telehealth refers to the mode of delivering health care services and public health via information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient’s health care while the patient is at the originating site and the health care provider is at a distant site. Supervisees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the “Standards of Practice for Telehealth,” available in the Board’s [Statutes and Regulations](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant and scroll to the bottom of the page). There is no limit on the number of telehealth hours that can be counted toward the supervised experience requirements.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 2290.5 and 4980.43; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1815.5*

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

The Board cannot accept hours of experience (including personal psychotherapy and workshops, training or conferences) that are older than six (6) years from the date the Board receives your *Application for Licensure*. The only exception is up to 500 hours of supervised experience obtained as a Trainee while enrolled in practicum – these 500 hours can be older than six (6) years.

For example, the Board receives an *Application for Licensure* on 03/24/2022. The Board can only accept hours earned by this applicant between 03/24/2016 and 03/24/2022 (except that up to 500 counseling and supervision hours obtained while a Trainee will be accepted even if they are older than 03/24/2016).

It is important to note that if your *Application for Licensure* is closed (also known as abandonment), you will be required to re-apply. Your six-year period will be recalculated to six years back from the date your new application is received, so it is important that you understand how the actions you take could result in file closure/abandonment. For more information on file closure/abandonment, see question [44](#).

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43*

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

**27. What is the difference between the supervision requirements for MFT Trainees and Associates?**

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

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

Trainees and Associates must receive at least one (1) unit of supervision, as defined above, during any week in which experience is gained in each work setting. In addition:

Trainees: One (1) additional unit of supervision is required if the Trainee provides more than five (5) hours of direct clinical counseling in a single week in a work setting.

Trainees must receive one (1) additional unit of supervision for every five (5) hours of direct clinical counseling provided in a single week in a work setting.

Associates: If an Associate provides more than 10 hours of direct clinical counseling in a single week in a work setting, the Associate must receive one (1) additional unit of supervision in that setting.

Note that Trainees can calculate ratios based on the average number of hours gained over the entire period of time a Trainee works in a particular setting. Supervision ratios cannot be averaged for individuals gaining hours postdegree.

TRAINEE - EXAMPLE #1:

A Trainee works one job and provides 16 hours of direct clinical counseling during a single week. This Trainee must receive four (4) units of supervision during that week.

TRAINEE - EXAMPLE #2:

A Trainee works two jobs, and provides 4 hours of direct clinical counseling at Job A, and 7 hours at Job B during a single week. This Trainee must receive three (3) units of supervision during that week (one (1) unit at Job A and two (2) units at Job B).

ASSOCIATE - EXAMPLE #1:

An Associate works one job and provides 25 hours of direct clinical counseling during a single week. This Associate must receive two (2) units of supervision during that week.

ASSOCIATE - EXAMPLE #2:

An Associate works two jobs, and provides 12 hours of direct clinical counseling at Job A and nine (9) hours at Job B during the same week. This Associate is required to receive a total of three (3) units of supervision during that week (two (2) units at Job A and one (1) unit at Job B).

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.2*

### **29. Can I be paid as a 1099 / independent contractor while a Trainee or Associate?**

### **30. Can I be employed as a volunteer?**

All Associates and Trainees must either be a paid W-2 employee or a volunteer employee. Trainees and Associates may also not bill clients directly. There are limited circumstances under which you may be paid under a 1099. If you work as a volunteer and receive reimbursement for expenses actually incurred, receiving a 1099 for those reimbursements is acceptable. If you have received a stipend or educational loan repayment from a program designed to encourage demographically underrepresented groups to enter the profession, or to improve recruitment and retention in underserved regions or settings, a 1099 for the stipend or loan repayment is acceptable. Those paid under a 1099 may be audited by the Board to ensure the payment was for one of the above purposes.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.3; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1833*

### **31. Who is eligible to supervise MFT Trainees or Associates?**

Only licensed mental health professionals can supervise Trainees or Associates. Licensed mental health professionals include any of the following:

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs)
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs)
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs) (must have met education and experience requirements that allow the LPCC to treat couples and families)
- Licensed Clinical Psychologists
- Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEP) (*Note: LEPs may only supervise up to 1,200 hours, which must consist of educationally related mental health services that are consistent with the LEP scope of practice described [in BPC section 4989.14](#)*)
- Licensed Physicians certified in Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

Additionally, the supervisor must meet all of the following:

- Complete the supervisor training and continuing professional development required by law (Licensed Clinical Psychologists and Psychiatrists are exempt from these requirements); and
- Maintain a current and active California license that is not under suspension or probation. (You can check your supervisor's status on the Department of Consumer Affairs License Search any time [here](#)); and
- Have been licensed in California or any other state for at least two (2) years out of the last five (5) years prior to the commencement of supervision; and

- Have practiced psychotherapy during at least two (2) years out of the last five (5) years prior to the commencement of supervision (or, if an LEP, has provided psychological counseling pursuant to [BPC section 4989.14](#)); **OR**
- Provided direct supervision to Marriage and Family Therapist Trainees, Associate Marriage and Family Therapists, Associate Professional Clinical Counselors, or Associate Clinical Social Workers who perform psychotherapy during at least two (2) years out of the last five (5) years prior to the commencement of supervision. Supervision of psychotherapy performed by a student (social work intern or a professional clinical counselor trainee) shall be accepted if the supervision performed is substantially equivalent to the supervision required for registrants.

*Statute cited: BPC sections 4980.03 and 4989.14*

### **32. How many supervisees can participate in a session of group supervision?**

Group supervision sessions shall include no more than eight (8) persons receiving supervision, even if there are two or more supervisors present. Group supervisors must ensure that the amount and degree of supervision is appropriate for each supervisee.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.2; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1833*

### **33. Can group supervision be broken into one-hour increments?**

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

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.2*

### **34. Can I receive supervision via videoconferencing or over the telephone?**

You may be able to obtain supervision via live two-way videoconferencing if your supervisor determines that it is appropriate to do so. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the client confidentiality is preserved. For more information see the [AB 1758 FAQ](#) (go to [bbs.ca.gov](http://bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>Law Changes).

Supervision provided over the telephone will not count toward licensure because the law requires supervision to have a face-to-face component.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.2*

### **35. What happens if my supervisor is temporarily unavailable to provide supervision?**

Alternative supervision must be arranged. The substitute supervisor must meet all regular supervisor qualifications. In addition:

- The substitute supervisor must sign your weekly log.
- You and the substitute supervisor must sign a *Supervision Agreement*.
- The substitute supervisor and your employer must sign a *Written Oversight Agreement* if one is required.

**If the substitute will be supervising you for MORE than 30 consecutive calendar days:**

- A new supervisory plan is also required, and
- The substitute supervisor must sign an *Experience Verification* form for hours earned under their supervision.

**If the substitute will be supervising you for 30 consecutive calendar days or LESS:**

- A new supervisory plan is not required.
- Your regular supervisor may sign an *Experience Verification* form that includes the experience gained under the substitute.

*Regulation cited: 16 CCR section 1833.1.5*

### **36. Do my supervisor and I have to be employed by the same employer?**

### **37. Does my supervisor need to be on site?**

If the registered associate will be working in a private practice or professional corporation, the supervisor must (1) be employed by or contracted by the associate's employer, or be an owner of the practice, and (2) either provide psychotherapeutic services to clients for the associate's employer or have a written contract with the associate's employer that provides the supervisor with the same access to the associate's clinical records as is provided to employees of the associate's employer.

In any work setting, if the supervisor is not employed by the supervisee's employer or is a volunteer, a written oversight agreement that addresses the supervisor's and employer's responsibilities must be signed by the supervisor and the employer prior to commencement of supervision. Please see the Board's [website](#) for a sample written oversight agreement (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs).

In any setting, supervisees may only perform services at the places where their employers permit business to be conducted, which may include performing services at other locations, so long as the services are performed in compliance with the laws pertaining to supervision.



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

- Ensure that the extent, kind and quality of counseling performed by the supervisee is consistent with the education, training and experience of the person being supervised.
- Monitor and evaluate the supervisee's assessment, diagnosis and treatment decisions and providing regular feedback.
- Monitor and evaluate the ability of the supervisee to provide services at the site(s) where he or she will be practicing and to the particular clientele being served.
- Monitoring and addressing clinical dynamics, including, but not limited to, countertransference-, intrapsychic-, interpersonal-, or trauma-related issues that may affect the supervisory or the practitioner-patient relationship.
- Ensure compliance with all laws governing the practice of marriage and family therapy.
- Reviewing the supervisee's progress notes, process notes, and other patient treatment records, as deemed appropriate by the supervisor.
- With the client's written consent, providing direct observation or review of audio or video recordings of the supervisee's counseling or therapy, as deemed appropriate by the supervisor.

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

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980.43.1, 4980.43.3 and 4980.43.4; Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1833 and 1833.1*

### **38. Where can I find more information about supervision?**

Please see the [Guide to Supervision for MFT Trainees and Associates](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs).

### **39. What forms do I use to record my experience hours and supervision?**

While gaining your hours of experience, use the following forms, available on the Board's [website](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs):

- Weekly Summary of Experience Hours (“Weekly Log”): Log your hours on this form on a weekly basis and have your supervisor sign weekly. You will retain the original logs. Do not submit Weekly Logs to the Board except upon request.
- Experience Verification: This form is completed upon the termination of your supervised experience with your supervisor, and must indicate the total hours completed in each category under your supervisor, your supervisor’s license information and information about your employer. Your supervisor will sign the form and provide you with the original for submission with your *Application for Licensure*.

**For Supervisory Relationships that Commenced BEFORE January 1, 2022:**

- Responsibility Statement for Supervisors of an MFT Trainee or Associate: Your supervisor must have signed this form prior to commencing supervision and provide you with the original. Retain for future submission with your *Application for Licensure*.

**For Supervisory Relationships that Commenced ON OR AFTER January 1, 2022:**

- Supervision Agreement: You and your supervisor must sign this form, which includes a collaboratively developed Supervisory Plan, within 60 days of commencing supervision. Retain for future submission with your *Application for Licensure*.

**Submission of forms as directed in the licensure application instructions will lessen the possibility that the licensing evaluator will need to request additional information from you, thus delaying the approval of your application.**

**40. Do I need to report hours gained pre-degree separately from hours gained postdegree?**

The Board strongly recommends that you submit your pre-degree and postdegree hours on separate *Experience Verification* forms, and maintain separate *Weekly Log* forms.

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

If you are receiving supervision from two individuals in one employment setting, the board recommends that you record all hours under your primary supervisor, with one exception. Any actual **supervision hours** that you received under your secondary supervisor must be recorded and signed for by your secondary supervisor on separate weekly logs and a separate *Experience Verification* form (your primary supervisor is not permitted to sign for supervision hours provided by another supervisor). However, all of your **work experience hours** in that setting may be recorded and signed for by your primary supervisor. Recording your experience in this manner will lessen the probability that the Board will need to request additional information from you when reviewing your *Application for Licensure*.

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

All supervision-related forms must be submitted with your *Application for Licensure*. Do not send these forms in with your Associate application. Do not submit your *Weekly Log* forms unless requested by the Board.

*Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1833 and 1833.1*

## **43. What do I need to do if I want to become dually licensed as an LPCC and LMFT?**

First, you must have a degree that qualifies for both license types. If so, you will be able to count hours toward both license types if you do all of the following:

- Register as both an AMFT and APCC (separate applications and fees).
- Ensure that both registrations are active while you are gaining hours of experience (or if you are gaining hours under the “90-day rule” as described in question [8](#), ensure that you have submitted both applications within the 90-day-period after graduation).
- Take the California Law and Ethics Exam for both license types to ensure your ability to renew (separate applications, fees and exams).
- Ensure that the hours you gain are within the scope of practice for both license types.
- Ensure that the hours you gain fit within the categories required and the minimums and maximums allowed for both license types.

## D. APPLYING FOR LICENSURE

### 44. What can cause my file to be closed? What happens when a file is closed?

File closure (also known as abandonment) could have major consequences, such as losing experience hours that are too old. Once a file is closed, an applicant may reapply, but must pay a new application fee and meet all current requirements. One of those requirements is that your hours are less than six (6) years old.

**If an *Application for Licensure* is closed (abandoned), you would lose any hours of experience that are more than six (6) years old**, based on the date the board receives the new *Application for Licensure*. See question [25](#) for more information about the six-year rule and one of the exceptions to the rule.

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

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

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1806*

### 45. What type of employment documentation does the Board require with my *Application for Licensure*?

If a Paid Employee: You must provide a copy of your W-2 for each year of paid employment in each work setting with your *Application for Licensure*. If your W-2 is not available, you may submit a copy of your “Wage and Income Transcript” from the Internal Revenue Service. W-2s are required for all tax years during which you gained experience. For the current tax year, include a photocopy of your most recent pay stub. A copy of your 1040 or other tax filing form is not acceptable. Originals are not required - photocopies are acceptable.

If a Volunteer Employee: You must provide a letter from your employer verifying your status as a volunteer with your *Application for Licensure*. A sample letter verifying volunteer status is available on the Board’s [website](#) (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs).

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.3; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1833*

#### 46. What additional coursework do I need to complete prior to licensure?

In addition to holding a qualifying degree, an applicant must complete specific courses prior to submitting an *Application for Licensure*. The courses required differ somewhat depending on when you entered and completed your degree program, and whether you have an in-state or out-of-state degree.

#### REQUIRED ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK FOR ALL APPLICANTS

Course	Required of:	Length	Content Required
<b>1. Provision of Mental Health Services via Telehealth</b>	All applicants submitting an application <b>on or after July 1, 2023</b> <i>(applicants before this date - will be required upon license renewal).</i>	3 hours of coursework or applied experience	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.395</a> . Must include law and ethics related to telehealth.
<b>2. Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention</b>	All applicants submitting an application <b>on or after January 1, 2021</b> <i>(applicants before this date - will be required upon license renewal).</i>	6 hours of coursework or applied experience	See question <a href="#">49</a> for more information.

#### REQUIRED COURSEWORK FOR APPLICANTS WITH A PRE-2012 CALIFORNIA DEGREE

If you entered an in-state degree program prior to August 1, 2012 and graduated prior to December 31, 2018, you are required to complete the courses listed below (unless identified on your transcript previously submitted for Associate registration).

*Note: The below topics are also required for applicants who entered a degree program after August 1, 2012. However, because this content is provided within California degree programs, proof of course completion not required.*

Course	Required of:	Length	Content Required
<b>1. Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012	7 hours	Must be based on California law. See BPC <a href="#">section 28</a> .
<b>2. Human Sexuality</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012	10 hours	BPC <a href="#">section 25</a> and 16 CCR <a href="#">section 1807</a>

*Continued on next page*

**REQUIRED COURSEWORK FOR APPLICANTS WITH A PRE-2012  
CALIFORNIA DEGREE (continued)**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Required of:</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Content Required</b>
<b>3. Alcoholism and Chemical Substance Abuse and Dependency</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012	15 hours	16 CCR <a href="#">section 1807.3</a>
<b>4. Aging, Long Term Care and Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012	10 hours	BPC <a href="#">section 4980.39</a>
<b>5. California Law and Professional Ethics</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012	2 semester units or 3 quarter units	BPC <a href="#">section 4980.41</a>
<b>6. Spousal/Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection and Intervention</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program between 01/01/1995 and 08/01/2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific number of hours if entered degree program before 12/31/03, but must cover assessment, detection and intervention</li> <li>• 15 hours if entered a degree program after 1/1/2004</li> </ul>	BPC <a href="#">section 4980.41</a>
<b>7. Psychological Testing</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program between 01/01/2001 and 08/01/2012	2 semester units or 3 quarter units	BPC <a href="#">section 4980.41</a>
<b>8. Psychopharmacology</b>	Applicants who entered a degree program between 01/01/2001 and 08/01/2012	2 semester units or 3 quarter units	BPC <a href="#">section 4980.41</a>

**REQUIRED COURSEWORK FOR APPLICANTS WITH AN OUT-OF-STATE DEGREE**

If your degree was earned out-of-state, you must complete all of the courses listed below.

Course	Length	Content Required
a) <b>Mental Health Recovery Oriented Care and Methods of Service Delivery</b>	45 hours or 3 semester units	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
b) <b>California Cultures and the Social and Psychological Implications of Socioeconomic Position</b>	15 hours or 1 semester unit	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
c) <b>Diagnosis, Assessment, Prognosis and Treatment of Mental Disorders</b>	2 semester units	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
d) <b>Psychological Testing</b>	15 hours or 1 semester unit	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
e) <b>Psychopharmacology</b>	15 hours or 1 semester unit	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
f) <b>Developmental Issues from Infancy to Old Age</b>	15 hours or 1 semester unit <i>(if deficient in a single topic listed, may remediate by taking 3 hours of instruction on each missing topic)</i>	Instruction must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental Issues from infancy to old age</li> <li>• The effects of developmental issues on individuals, couples and family relationships.</li> <li>• The psychological, psychotherapeutic, and health implications of developmental issues and their effects.</li> <li>• The understanding of the impact that personal and social insecurity, social stress, low educational levels, inadequate housing and malnutrition have on human development.</li> </ul> See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
g) <b>Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting in California</b>	7 hours	See BPC sections <a href="#">28</a> and <a href="#">4980.81</a>
h) <b>Aging, Long Term Care and Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse, End-of-Life and Grief</b>	10 hours	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>

*Continued on next page*

**REQUIRED COURSEWORK FOR APPLICANTS WITH AN OUT-OF-STATE DEGREE  
(continued)**

Course	Length	Content Required
i) <b>Spousal/Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection and Intervention</b>	15 hours	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
j) <b>Multicultural Development and Cross-Cultural Interaction</b>	15 hours or 1 semester unit	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
k) <b>Human Sexuality</b>	10 hours	See BPC section <a href="#">4980.81</a> and 16 CCR <a href="#">section 1807</a>
l) <b>Substance Use Disorders</b>	15 hours	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
m) <b>Co-Occurring Disorders and Addiction</b>	15 hours	See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a>
n) <b>Miscellaneous Content</b>	No specific number of hours required, but content must be adequately covered within the applicant's coursework	<p>Instruction must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childbirth, child rearing, parenting and step-parenting</li> <li>• Marriage, divorce and blended families</li> <li>• Cultural factors relevant to abuse of partners and family members</li> <li>• Poverty and deprivation</li> <li>• Financial and social stress</li> <li>• Effects of trauma</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">BPC section 4980.81</a></p>

**47. Do I need to take my additional coursework at a university?**

No. Additional coursework may be taken from a school that holds a regional or national institutional accreditation recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), a school approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE), or an acceptable continuing education provider, and may be taken in-person or online.

**48. Is my additional coursework too old?**

Coursework may have been taken at any time in the past.



#### **49. What is allowed for the Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention training?**

This training, as described on page [19](#), may be taken as a course; or, if this content was included within your supervised experience and you can obtain a written certification from the program's director of training, or from your primary supervisor stating that the training was included within your supervised experience, it may be accepted in lieu of a course.

If this content was included within your qualifying degree program, you will need to obtain a written certification from the registrar or training director of your school or program stating that this coursework was included within the curriculum required for graduation, or within the coursework that was completed by you (if you submitted an Associate application after January 1, 2020, your *Degree Program Certification* may have already included this verification). Otherwise, this requirement may be met by taking a six-hour course from a school that holds a regional or national institutional accreditation recognized by the USDE, a school approved by the BPPE, or a Board-accepted continuing education provider.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.396*

#### **50. How can I provide verification of my experience if my supervisor is deceased or incapacitated?**

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

- Evidence that your supervisor is deceased or incapacitated. For example: A copy of an obituary or death certificate if deceased; a doctor's note, letter of conservatorship, or letter from the employer if incapacitated.
- All supervision documentation which had previously been signed by the supervisor, including:
  - The previously signed *Supervisor Responsibility Statement* or *Supervision Agreement*;
  - The previously signed *Supervisory Plan*; and
  - The previously signed *Weekly Log* forms.
- Documentation from the employer verifying employment of the supervisor and supervisee. A letter from the employer will suffice. Other documentation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- The written oversight agreement if your supervisor was not employed by your employer.

Note: Any letter from your employer must either be on the employer's letterhead or via email from your employer from a verifiable email address.

*Statute cited: BPC sections 4980.43.3; Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1815.8 and 1833*

### **51. What should I do if my supervisor refuses to sign for my hours?**

The first step is to contact your supervisor and inform them that they are obligated by law to sign for hours that you completed. The law (reference below) states, "A supervisor shall give at least one (1) week's prior written notice to a supervisee of the supervisor's intent not to sign for any further hours of experience for such person. A supervisor who has not provided such notice shall sign for hours of experience obtained in good faith where such supervisor actually provided the required supervision." If the supervisor continues to refuse to sign for your hours, you may then file a complaint with the Board. You may file your complaint electronically at [www.breeze.ca.gov](http://www.breeze.ca.gov).

*Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1821*

### **52. Do I need to resubmit fingerprints with my Application for Licensure?**

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

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

*Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1815*

### **53. What happens once I submit my Application for Licensure?**

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

- There are one or more deficiencies in your application. You will have one (1) year from the date of the initial deficiency notice to clear all deficiencies. If you do not clear your deficiencies within one year, your file will be closed (see question [44](#) for implications of file closure/abandonment).

OR

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

Once you pass both required exams: Submit the [Request for Initial License Issuance](#) form (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs) with the required fee. Your license will be issued within 30 business days from the date of receipt.

*Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1806*

### **54. Do I need to maintain a current Associate registration number to participate in the clinical exam?**

The Board encourages all individuals to maintain a current Associate registration and to continue recording experience hours until licensed as an LMFT, as a safeguard in the event that some of the hours submitted are unable to be accepted by the Board either

now or in the future due to application closure/abandonment and/or the “six-year rule” (see question [44](#) for more information).

Whether you are required by law to maintain a registration, however, will depend on the type of setting you are working in. If working in a non-exempt setting, you are required to maintain a current Associate registration until your LMFT license has been issued. If you are working in an exempt setting (an institution that is both non-profit and charitable, a school or a governmental entity) you are not required to maintain a registration once you have submitted your experience hours. However, your employer may require it as a condition of employment.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980.01 and 4980.43; Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1806*

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

Once the required number of experience hours are gained, you must receive a minimum of one hour of direct supervisor contact per week for each practice setting in which direct clinical counseling is performed. Once the required number of experience hours are gained, further supervision for nonclinical practice shall be at the supervisor’s discretion.

*Statute cited: BPC section 4980.43.2*

### **56. Once I pass both exams, can I start practicing independently?**

No. A successful examinee still must submit a [Request for Initial License Issuance](#) form (go to [www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)>Applicant>LMFT>Forms/Pubs) and fee before the Board will issue a LMFT license. Submit this form and fee upon completion of all licensure requirements – do not submit sooner or it will be rejected. Your license will be issued within 30 business days from the date of receipt. Independent practice cannot begin until the Board issues a license. Otherwise it is considered unlicensed practice, which is subject to disciplinary action by the Board.

*Statutes cited: BPC sections 4980 and 4982*