

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to mental health professional
 3 licensure; amending s. 491.005, F.S.; revising
 4 educational requirements for marriage and family
 5 therapist and mental health counselor licenses;
 6 providing an effective date.

7
 8 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

9
 10 Section 1. Subsections (3) and (4) of section 491.005,
 11 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

12 491.005 Licensure by examination.—

13 (3) MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY.—Upon verification of
 14 documentation and payment of a fee not to exceed \$200, as set by
 15 board rule, plus the actual cost of the purchase of the
 16 examination from the Association of Marital and Family Therapy
 17 Regulatory Board, or similar national organization, the
 18 department shall issue a license as a marriage and family
 19 therapist to an applicant who the board certifies has met all of
 20 the following criteria:

21 (a) ~~Has~~ Submitted an application and paid the appropriate
 22 fee.

23 (b) 1. Attained one of the following:

24 a. A minimum of a master's degree in marriage and family
 25 therapy from a program accredited by the Commission on

26 Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education;
 27 b. A minimum of a master's degree with a major emphasis in
 28 marriage and family therapy or a closely related field from a
 29 university program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of
 30 Counseling and Related Educational Programs and graduate courses
 31 approved by the board; or
 32 c. Has A minimum of a master's degree with an major
 33 emphasis in marriage and family therapy or a closely related
 34 field, with a degree conferred before September 1, 2027, from an
 35 institutionally accredited college or university from a program
 36 accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and
 37 Family Therapy Education or from a Florida university program
 38 accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and
 39 Related Educational Programs and graduate courses approved by
 40 the board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy,
 41 and Mental Health Counseling.
 42 2. If the course title that appears on the applicant's
 43 transcript does not clearly identify the content of the
 44 coursework, the applicant must ~~shall~~ provide additional
 45 documentation, including, but not limited to, a syllabus or
 46 catalog description published for the course. The required
 47 master's degree must have been received in an institution of
 48 higher education that, at the time the applicant graduated, was
 49 fully accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by
 50 the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation or

51 | publicly recognized as a member in good standing with the
52 | Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, or an
53 | institution of higher education located outside the United
54 | States and Canada which, at the time the applicant was enrolled
55 | and at the time the applicant graduated, maintained a standard
56 | of training substantially equivalent to the standards of
57 | training of those institutions in the United States which are
58 | accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the
59 | Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation. Such
60 | foreign education and training must have been received in an
61 | institution or program of higher education officially recognized
62 | by the government of the country in which it is located as an
63 | institution or program to train students to practice as
64 | professional marriage and family therapists or psychotherapists.
65 | The applicant has the burden of establishing that the
66 | requirements of this provision have been met, and the board
67 | shall require documentation, such as an evaluation by a foreign
68 | equivalency determination service, as evidence that the
69 | applicant's graduate degree program and education were
70 | equivalent to an accredited program in this country. An
71 | applicant with a master's degree from a program that did not
72 | emphasize marriage and family therapy may complete the
73 | coursework requirement in a training institution fully
74 | accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and
75 | Family Therapy Education recognized by the United States

76 Department of Education.

77 (c) Completed ~~Has had~~ at least 2 years of clinical
78 experience during which 50 percent of the applicant's clients
79 were receiving marriage and family therapy services, which must
80 be at the post-master's level under the supervision of a
81 licensed marriage and family therapist with at least 5 years of
82 experience, or the equivalent, who is a qualified supervisor as
83 determined by the board. An individual who intends to practice
84 in Florida to satisfy the clinical experience requirements must
85 register pursuant to s. 491.0045 before commencing practice. If
86 a graduate has a master's degree with a major emphasis in
87 marriage and family therapy or a closely related field which did
88 not include all of the coursework required by paragraph (b),
89 credit for the post-master's level clinical experience may not
90 commence until the applicant has completed a minimum of 10 of
91 the courses required by paragraph (b), as determined by the
92 board, and at least 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours of the
93 course credits must have been completed in the area of marriage
94 and family systems, theories, or techniques. Within the 2 years
95 of required experience, the applicant shall provide direct
96 individual, group, or family therapy and counseling to cases
97 including those involving unmarried dyads, married couples,
98 separating and divorcing couples, and family groups that include
99 children. A doctoral internship may be applied toward the
100 clinical experience requirement. A licensed mental health

101 professional must be on the premises when clinical services are
 102 provided by a registered intern in a private practice setting.

103 (d) ~~Has~~ Passed a theory and practice examination provided
 104 by the department.

105 (e) ~~Has~~ Demonstrated, in a manner designated by board
 106 rule, knowledge of the laws and rules governing the practice of
 107 clinical social work, marriage and family therapy, and mental
 108 health counseling.

109
 110 For the purposes of dual licensure, the department shall license
 111 as a marriage and family therapist any person who meets the
 112 requirements of s. 491.0057. Fees for dual licensure may not
 113 exceed those stated in this subsection.

114 (4) MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING.—Upon verification of
 115 documentation and payment of a fee not to exceed \$200, as set by
 116 board rule, plus the actual per applicant cost of purchase of
 117 the examination from the National Board for Certified Counselors
 118 or its successor organization, the department shall issue a
 119 license as a mental health counselor to an applicant who the
 120 board certifies has met all of the following criteria:

121 (a) ~~Has~~ Submitted an application and paid the appropriate
 122 fee.

123 (b)1. Attained ~~Has~~ a minimum of an earned master's degree
 124 from a mental health counseling program accredited by the
 125 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related

126 Educational Programs which consists of at least 60 semester
127 hours or 80 quarter hours of clinical and didactic instruction,
128 including a course in human sexuality and a course in substance
129 abuse. If the master's degree is earned from a program related
130 to the practice of mental health counseling which is not
131 accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling
132 and Related Educational Programs, then the coursework and
133 practicum, internship, or fieldwork must consist of at least 60
134 semester hours or 80 quarter hours and meet all of the following
135 requirements:

136 a. Thirty-three semester hours or 44 quarter hours of
137 graduate coursework, which must include a minimum of 3 semester
138 hours or 4 quarter hours of graduate-level coursework in each of
139 the following 11 content areas: counseling theories and
140 practice; human growth and development; diagnosis and treatment
141 of psychopathology; human sexuality; group theories and
142 practice; individual evaluation and assessment; career and
143 lifestyle assessment; research and program evaluation; social
144 and cultural foundations; substance abuse; and legal, ethical,
145 and professional standards issues in the practice of mental
146 health counseling. Courses in research, thesis or dissertation
147 work, practicums, internships, or fieldwork may not be applied
148 toward this requirement.

149 b. A minimum of 3 semester hours or 4 quarter hours of
150 graduate-level coursework addressing diagnostic processes,

151 including differential diagnosis and the use of the current
152 diagnostic tools, such as the current edition of the American
153 Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of
154 Mental Disorders. The graduate program must have emphasized the
155 common core curricular experience.

156 c. The equivalent, as determined by the board, of at least
157 700 hours of university-sponsored supervised clinical practicum,
158 internship, or field experience that includes at least 280 hours
159 of direct client services, as required in the accrediting
160 standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and
161 Related Educational Programs for mental health counseling
162 programs. This experience may not be used to satisfy the post-
163 master's clinical experience requirement.

164 2. ~~Has~~ Provided additional documentation if a course title
165 that appears on the applicant's transcript does not clearly
166 identify the content of the coursework. The documentation must
167 include, but is not limited to, a syllabus or catalog
168 description published for the course.

169
170 Education and training in mental health counseling must have
171 been received in an institution of higher education that, at the
172 time the applicant graduated, was fully accredited by a regional
173 accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education
174 Accreditation or its successor organization or publicly
175 recognized as a member in good standing with the Association of

176 Universities and Colleges of Canada, or an institution of higher
177 education located outside the United States and Canada which, at
178 the time the applicant was enrolled and at the time the
179 applicant graduated, maintained a standard of training
180 substantially equivalent to the standards of training of those
181 institutions in the United States which are accredited by a
182 regional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher
183 Education Accreditation or its successor organization. Such
184 foreign education and training must have been received in an
185 institution or program of higher education officially recognized
186 by the government of the country in which it is located as an
187 institution or program to train students to practice as mental
188 health counselors. The applicant has the burden of establishing
189 that the requirements of this provision have been met, and the
190 board shall require documentation, such as an evaluation by a
191 foreign equivalency determination service, as evidence that the
192 applicant's graduate degree program and education were
193 equivalent to an accredited program in this country. Beginning
194 July 1, 2025, an applicant must have a master's degree from a
195 program that is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of
196 Counseling and Related Educational Programs, the Masters in
197 Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council, or an
198 equivalent accrediting body which consists of at least 60
199 semester hours or 80 quarter hours to apply for licensure under
200 this paragraph.

201 (c) Completed ~~Has had~~ at least 2 years of clinical
202 experience in mental health counseling, which must be at the
203 post-master's level under the supervision of a licensed mental
204 health counselor or the equivalent who is a qualified supervisor
205 as determined by the board. An individual who intends to
206 practice in Florida to satisfy the clinical experience
207 requirements must register pursuant to s. 491.0045 before
208 commencing practice. If a graduate has a master's degree with a
209 major related to the practice of mental health counseling which
210 did not include all the coursework required under sub-
211 subparagraphs (b)1.a. and b., credit for the post-master's level
212 clinical experience may not commence until the applicant has
213 completed a minimum of seven of the courses required under sub-
214 subparagraphs (b)1.a. and b., as determined by the board, one of
215 which must be a course in psychopathology or abnormal
216 psychology. A doctoral internship may be applied toward the
217 clinical experience requirement. A licensed mental health
218 professional must be on the premises when clinical services are
219 provided by a registered intern in a private practice setting.

220 (d) ~~Has~~ Passed a theory and practice examination provided
221 by the department for this purpose.

222 (e) ~~Has~~ Demonstrated, in a manner designated by board
223 rule, knowledge of the laws and rules governing the practice of
224 clinical social work, marriage and family therapy, and mental
225 health counseling.

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226 | Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law. |