

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to mental health professional
 3 licensure; amending s. 491.005, F.S.; revising
 4 licensing requirements for marriage and family
 5 therapists and mental health counselors; providing an
 6 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 an institutional ~~a regional~~ accrediting body
 50 recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or

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

76 coursework requirement in a training institution fully
77 accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and
78 Family Therapy Education recognized by the United States
79 Department of Education.

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

101 separating and divorcing couples, and family groups that include
 102 children. A doctoral internship may be applied toward the
 103 clinical experience requirement. A licensed mental health
 104 professional must be on the premises when clinical services are
 105 provided by a registered intern in a private practice setting.

106 (d) ~~Has~~ Passed a theory and practice examination
 107 designated provided by board rule ~~the department.~~

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

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

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

124 (a) ~~Has~~ Submitted an application and paid the appropriate
 125 fee.

126 (b)1. Attained ~~Has~~ a minimum of an earned master's degree
127 from a mental health counseling program accredited by the
128 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related
129 Educational Programs which consists of at least 60 semester
130 hours or 80 quarter hours of clinical and didactic instruction,
131 including a course in human sexuality and a course in substance
132 abuse. If the master's degree is earned from a program related
133 to the practice of mental health counseling which is not
134 accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling
135 and Related Educational Programs, then the coursework and
136 practicum, internship, or fieldwork must consist of at least 60
137 semester hours or 80 quarter hours and meet all of the following
138 requirements:

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

151 toward this requirement.

152 b. A minimum of 3 semester hours or 4 quarter hours of
153 graduate-level coursework addressing diagnostic processes,
154 including differential diagnosis and the use of the current
155 diagnostic tools, such as the current edition of the American
156 Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of
157 Mental Disorders. The graduate program must have emphasized the
158 common core curricular experience.

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

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

172
173 Education and training in mental health counseling must have
174 been received in an institution of higher education that, at the
175 time the applicant graduated, was fully accredited by an

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

201 Accreditation Council, or an equivalent accrediting body which
202 consists of at least 60 semester hours or 80 quarter hours to
203 apply for licensure under this paragraph.

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

223 (d) ~~Has~~ Passed a theory and practice examination
224 designated provided by board rule ~~the department for this~~
225 ~~purpose.~~

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

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