

By the Committee on Health Policy; and Senator Gruters

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

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

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

12 491.005 Licensure by examination.—

13 (1) CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK.—Upon verification of
14 documentation and payment of a fee not to exceed \$200, as set by
15 board rule, ~~plus the actual per applicant cost to the department~~
16 ~~for purchase of the examination from the American Association of~~
17 ~~State Social Worker's Boards or a similar national organization,~~
18 the department shall issue a license as a clinical social worker
19 to an applicant whom ~~who~~ the board certifies has met all of the
20 following criteria:

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

23 (b)1. ~~Has~~ Received a doctoral degree in social work from a
24 graduate school of social work which at the time the applicant
25 graduated was accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by
26 the United States Department of Education or ~~has~~ received a
27 master's degree in social work from a graduate school of social
28 work which at the time the applicant graduated:

29 a. Was accredited by the Council on Social Work Education;

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30 b. Was accredited by the Canadian Association of Schools of
31 Social Work; or

32 c. Has been determined to have been a program equivalent to
33 programs approved by the Council on Social Work Education by the
34 Foreign Equivalency Determination Service of the Council on
35 Social Work Education. An applicant who graduated from a program
36 at a university or college outside of the United States or
37 Canada must present documentation of the equivalency
38 determination from the council in order to qualify.

39 2. The applicant's graduate program ~~must have~~ emphasized
40 direct clinical patient or client health care services,
41 including, but not limited to, coursework in clinical social
42 work, psychiatric social work, medical social work, social
43 casework, psychotherapy, or group therapy. The applicant's
44 graduate program must have included all of the following
45 coursework:

46 a. A supervised field placement which was part of the
47 applicant's advanced concentration in direct practice, during
48 which the applicant provided clinical services directly to
49 clients.

50 b. Completion of 24 semester hours or 32 quarter hours in
51 theory of human behavior and practice methods as courses in
52 clinically oriented services, including a minimum of one course
53 in psychopathology, and no more than one course in research,
54 taken in a school of social work accredited or approved pursuant
55 to subparagraph 1.

56 3. If the course title which appears on the applicant's
57 transcript does not clearly identify the content of the
58 coursework, the applicant provided ~~shall be required to provide~~

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59 additional documentation, including, but not limited to, a
60 syllabus or catalog description published for the course.

61 (c) Completed ~~Has had~~ at least 2 years of clinical social
62 work experience, which took place subsequent to completion of a
63 graduate degree in social work at an institution meeting the
64 accreditation requirements of this section, under the
65 supervision of a licensed clinical social worker or the
66 equivalent who is a qualified supervisor as determined by the
67 board. An individual who intends to practice in Florida to
68 satisfy clinical experience requirements must register pursuant
69 to s. 491.0045 before commencing practice. If the applicant's
70 graduate program was not a program which emphasized direct
71 clinical patient or client health care services as described in
72 subparagraph (b)2., the supervised experience requirement must
73 take place after the applicant has completed a minimum of 15
74 semester hours or 22 quarter hours of the coursework required. A
75 doctoral internship may be applied toward the clinical social
76 work experience requirement. A licensed mental health
77 professional must be on the premises when clinical services are
78 provided by a registered intern in a private practice setting.

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

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

85 (3) MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY.—Upon verification of
86 documentation and payment of a fee not to exceed \$200, as set by
87 board rule, ~~plus the actual cost of the purchase of the~~

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88 ~~examination from the Association of Marital and Family Therapy~~
89 ~~Regulatory Board, or similar national organization,~~ the
90 department shall issue a license as a marriage and family
91 therapist to an applicant who the board certifies has met all of
92 the following criteria:

93 (a) ~~Has~~ Submitted an application and paid the appropriate
94 fee.

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

96 a. A minimum of a master's degree in marriage and family
97 therapy from a program accredited by the Commission on
98 Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education.

99 b. A minimum of a master's degree with a major emphasis in
100 marriage and family therapy or a closely related field from a
101 university program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of
102 Counseling and Related Educational Programs and graduate courses
103 approved by the board.

104 c. ~~Has~~ A minimum of a master's degree with an ~~major~~
105 emphasis in marriage and family therapy or a closely related
106 field, with a degree conferred before September 1, 2027, from an
107 institutionally accredited college or university ~~from a program~~
108 ~~accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and~~
109 ~~Family Therapy Education or from a Florida university program~~
110 ~~accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and~~
111 ~~Related Educational Programs~~ and graduate courses approved by
112 the board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy,
113 and Mental Health Counseling.

114 2. If the course title that appears on the applicant's
115 transcript does not clearly identify the content of the
116 coursework, the applicant provided ~~shall provide~~ additional

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117 documentation, including, but not limited to, a syllabus or
118 catalog description published for the course. The required
119 master's degree must have been received in an institution of
120 higher education that, at the time the applicant graduated, was
121 fully accredited by an institutional ~~a regional~~ accrediting body
122 recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or
123 its successor organization ~~Commission on Recognition of~~
124 ~~Postsecondary Accreditation~~ or was ~~publicly recognized~~ as a
125 member in good standing with the Association of Universities and
126 Colleges of Canada, or an institution of higher education
127 located outside the United States and Canada which, at the time
128 the applicant was enrolled and at the time the applicant
129 graduated, maintained a standard of training substantially
130 equivalent to the standards of training of those institutions in
131 the United States which are accredited by an institutional ~~a~~
132 ~~regional~~ accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher
133 Education Accreditation or its successor organization ~~Commission~~
134 ~~on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation~~. Such foreign
135 education and training must have been received in an institution
136 or program of higher education officially recognized by the
137 government of the country in which it is located as an
138 institution or program to train students to practice as
139 professional marriage and family therapists or psychotherapists.
140 The applicant has the burden of establishing that the
141 requirements of this provision have been met, and the board
142 shall require documentation, such as an evaluation by a foreign
143 equivalency determination service, as evidence that the
144 applicant's graduate degree program and education were
145 equivalent to an accredited program in this country. An

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146 applicant with a master's degree from a program that did not
147 emphasize marriage and family therapy may complete the
148 coursework requirement in a training institution fully
149 accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and
150 Family Therapy Education recognized by the United States
151 Department of Education.

152 (c) Completed ~~Has had~~ at least 2 years of clinical
153 experience during which 50 percent of the applicant's clients
154 were receiving marriage and family therapy services, which must
155 be at the post-master's level under the supervision of a
156 licensed marriage and family therapist with at least 5 years of
157 experience, or the equivalent, who is a qualified supervisor as
158 determined by the board. An individual who intends to practice
159 in Florida to satisfy the clinical experience requirements must
160 register pursuant to s. 491.0045 before commencing practice. If
161 a graduate has a master's degree with a major emphasis in
162 marriage and family therapy or a closely related field which did
163 not include all of the coursework required by paragraph (b),
164 credit for the post-master's level clinical experience may not
165 commence until the applicant has completed a minimum of 10 of
166 the courses required by paragraph (b), as determined by the
167 board, and at least 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours of the
168 course credits must have been completed in the area of marriage
169 and family systems, theories, or techniques. Within the 2 years
170 of required experience, the applicant shall provide direct
171 individual, group, or family therapy and counseling to cases
172 including those involving unmarried dyads, married couples,
173 separating and divorcing couples, and family groups that include
174 children. A doctoral internship may be applied toward the

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175 clinical experience requirement. A licensed mental health
176 professional must be on the premises when clinical services are
177 provided by a registered intern in a private practice setting.

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

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

184

185 For the purposes of dual licensure, the department shall license
186 as a marriage and family therapist any person who meets the
187 requirements of s. 491.0057. Fees for dual licensure may not
188 exceed those stated in this subsection.

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

196 (a) ~~Has~~ Submitted an application and paid the appropriate
197 fee.

198 (b)1. Attained ~~Has~~ a minimum of an earned master's degree
199 from a mental health counseling program accredited by the
200 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related
201 Educational Programs which consists of at least 60 semester
202 hours or 80 quarter hours of clinical and didactic instruction,
203 including a course in human sexuality and a course in substance

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204 abuse. If the master's degree is earned from a program related
205 to the practice of mental health counseling which is not
206 accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling
207 and Related Educational Programs, then the coursework and
208 practicum, internship, or fieldwork must consist of at least 60
209 semester hours or 80 quarter hours and meet all of the following
210 requirements:

211 a. Thirty-three semester hours or 44 quarter hours of
212 graduate coursework, which must include a minimum of 3 semester
213 hours or 4 quarter hours of graduate-level coursework in each of
214 the following 11 content areas: counseling theories and
215 practice; human growth and development; diagnosis and treatment
216 of psychopathology; human sexuality; group theories and
217 practice; individual evaluation and assessment; career and
218 lifestyle assessment; research and program evaluation; social
219 and cultural foundations; substance abuse; and legal, ethical,
220 and professional standards issues in the practice of mental
221 health counseling. Courses in research, thesis or dissertation
222 work, practicums, internships, or fieldwork may not be applied
223 toward this requirement.

224 b. A minimum of 3 semester hours or 4 quarter hours of
225 graduate-level coursework addressing diagnostic processes,
226 including differential diagnosis and the use of the current
227 diagnostic tools, such as the current edition of the American
228 Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of
229 Mental Disorders. The graduate program must have emphasized the
230 common core curricular experience.

231 c. The equivalent, as determined by the board, of at least
232 700 hours of university-sponsored supervised clinical practicum,

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233 internship, or field experience that includes at least 280 hours
234 of direct client services, as required in the accrediting
235 standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and
236 Related Educational Programs for mental health counseling
237 programs. This experience may not be used to satisfy the post-
238 master's clinical experience requirement.

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

244
245 Education and training in mental health counseling must have
246 been received in an institution of higher education that, at the
247 time the applicant graduated, was fully accredited by an
248 institutional ~~a regional~~ accrediting body recognized by the
249 Council for Higher Education Accreditation or its successor
250 organization or was ~~publicly recognized as~~ a member in good
251 standing with the Association of Universities and Colleges of
252 Canada, or an institution of higher education located outside
253 the United States and Canada which, at the time the applicant
254 was enrolled and at the time the applicant graduated, maintained
255 a standard of training substantially equivalent to the standards
256 of training of those institutions in the United States which are
257 accredited by an institutional ~~a regional~~ accrediting body
258 recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or
259 its successor organization. Such foreign education and training
260 must have been received in an institution or program of higher
261 education officially recognized by the government of the country

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262 in which it is located as an institution or program to train
263 students to practice as mental health counselors. The applicant
264 has the burden of establishing that the requirements of this
265 provision have been met, and the board shall require
266 documentation, such as an evaluation by a foreign equivalency
267 determination service, as evidence that the applicant's graduate
268 degree program and education were equivalent to an accredited
269 program in this country. Beginning July 1, 2025, an applicant
270 must have a master's degree from a program that is accredited by
271 the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related
272 Educational Programs, the Masters in Psychology and Counseling
273 Accreditation Council, or an equivalent accrediting body which
274 consists of at least 60 semester hours or 80 quarter hours to
275 apply for licensure under this paragraph.

276 (c) Completed ~~Has had~~ at least 2 years of clinical
277 experience in mental health counseling, which must be at the
278 post-master's level under the supervision of a licensed mental
279 health counselor or the equivalent who is a qualified supervisor
280 as determined by the board. An individual who intends to
281 practice in Florida to satisfy the clinical experience
282 requirements must register pursuant to s. 491.0045 before
283 commencing practice. If a graduate has a master's degree with a
284 major related to the practice of mental health counseling which
285 did not include all the coursework required under sub-
286 subparagraphs (b)1.a. and b., credit for the post-master's level
287 clinical experience may not commence until the applicant has
288 completed a minimum of seven of the courses required under sub-
289 subparagraphs (b)1.a. and b., as determined by the board, one of
290 which must be a course in psychopathology or abnormal

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291 psychology. A doctoral internship may be applied toward the
292 clinical experience requirement. A licensed mental health
293 professional must be on the premises when clinical services are
294 provided by a registered intern in a private practice setting.

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

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

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