Agency Name: Board of Examiners for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, Addiction Counselors, and Psycho-Educational Specialists - Labor, Licensing and Regulation

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Subject: Licensing Provisions for Professional Counselor Associate and Marriage and Family Therapy Associates

History: 5354

By Date Action Description Jt. Res. No. Expiration Date

- 10/25/2024 Proposed Reg Published in SR

- 01/14/2025 Received President of the Senate & Speaker 01/18/2026

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S 02/13/2025 Resolution Introduced to Approve 351

Document No. 5354

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION**

**BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR LICENSURE OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS, ADDICTION COUNSELORS AND PSYCHO‑EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS**

CHAPTER36

Statutory Authority: 1976 Code Sections 40‑1‑70 and 40‑75‑60

36-04. Licensing Provisions for Professional Counselor Associate.

36-07. Licensing Provisions for Marriage and Family Therapy Associates.

36-09. Licensing Provisions for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapy Supervisors.

36-16. Continuing Education Requirements for Professional Counselors, Addiction Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists.

36-17. Continuing Education Requirements for Psycho‑Educational Specialists.

**Synopsis:**

The Board of Examiners for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, Addiction Counselors and Psycho‑Educational Specialists proposes to amend R.36‑04 and R.36‑07 regarding educational requirements for Licensed Professional Counselor associates and Marriage and Family Therapist associates, and to amend continuing education requirements for licensees of the Board to conform to Act 158 of the 2024 legislative session.

A Notice of Drafting was published in the *State Register* on June 28, 2024.

**Instructions:**

Print the regulation as shown below. All other items remain unchanged.

~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

**Text:**

ARTICLE 3

Licensing Provisions

36‑04. Licensing Provisions for Professional Counselor Associates.

An applicant for initial licensure as a professional counselor associate must:

(1) submit an application on forms approved by the Board, along with the required fee; and

(2) show evidence of graduation from a minimum sixty (60) graduate semester hours Clinical Mental Health counseling program accredited by ~~the~~ CACREP at the time of graduation; or

(3) submit evidence of successful completion of a master’s degree, specialist’s degree or doctoral degree with a minimum of sixty (60) graduate semester hours primarily in counseling from a program accredited by a national educational accrediting body such as CACREP or one that requires and follows substantially similar educational standards, and from a college or university accredited by the Commission on the Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, one of its transferring regional associations, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, or a regionally‑accredited institution of higher learning subsequent to receiving the graduate degree. A school may submit a program to the Board for review and determination as to whether it meets substantially similar education standards;

(4) submit evidence of a passing score on examinations approved by the Board; and

(5) submit a supervision plan, satisfactory to the Board, designed to take effect after notice of licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor Associate. The supervision plan can be submitted with the application, or after the applicant obtains employment; however, an associate cannot begin providing counselor services until a completed supervision plan is submitted to and received by the Board; and

~~(6) The provisions in Reg. 36‑04(3) regarding education requirements take effect two years from May 24, 2019. Students who have graduated from or are enrolled in a degree program prior to that effective date can meet the education licensing requirements pursuant to the education licensing provisions in effect prior to that date.~~

36‑07. Licensing Provisions for Marriage and Family Therapy Associates.

An applicant for initial licensure as a marriage and family therapy associate must:

(1) submit an application on forms approved by the Board, along with the required fee; and

(2) submit proof of graduating from a minimum of a sixty (60) graduate semester hours program accredited by COAMFTE or from a minimum of a sixty (60) graduate semester hours marriage, couple and family counseling specialty program accredited by CACREP; or

(3) submit evidence of successful completion of a master’s degree, specialist’s degree or doctoral degree with a minimum of sixty (60) graduate semester hours in marriage and family therapy from a program accredited by a national educational accrediting body such as COAMFTE or one that requires or follows substantially similar educational standards, or from a marriage, couple and family counseling specialty program accredited by CACREP; or a post‑degree program accredited by COAMFTE or one that requires or follows substantially similar educational standards~~, or from a marriage, couple and family counseling specialty program accredited by CACREP~~; and from a college or university accredited by the Commission on the Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, one of its transferring regional associations, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, or a regionally accredited institution of higher learning subsequent to receiving the graduate degree. A school may submit a program to the Board for review and determination as to whether it meets substantially similar education standards.

(4) submit evidence of a passing score on examinations approved by the Board; and

(5) submit a supervision plan, satisfactory to the Board, designed to take effect after notice of licensure as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapy Associate. The supervision plan can be submitted with the application, or after the applicant obtains employment; however, an associate cannot begin providing marriage and family therapy services until a completed supervision plan is submitted to and received by the Board.

~~(6) The provisions in Reg. 36‑07(3) regarding education requirements take effect two years from May 24, 2019. Students who have graduated from or are enrolled in a degree program prior to that effective date can meet the education licensing requirements pursuant to the education licensing provisions in effect prior to that date.~~

36‑09. Licensing Provisions for Licensed Marriage and Family Therapy Supervisors.

An applicant for licensure as a marriage and family therapy supervisor must:

(1) submit an application on forms approved by the Board, along with the required fee; and

(2) hold a current, active, and unrestricted South Carolina Marriage and Family Therapy License; and

(3) either (a) or (b):

(a) hold a doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or in a CACREP accredited marriage, couple and family counseling specialty, or

(b) provide:

(i) ~~submit~~ evidence acceptable to the Board of at least five (5) years of continuous clinical experience immediately preceding the application; and

(ii) ~~(4) submit~~ evidence of a minimum of thirty‑six (36) hours of individual/triadic supervision, over a period of no less than two (2) years, by a Board licensed marriage and family therapy supervisor or other qualified mental health practitioner approved by the Board prior to beginning supervision, of the applicant’s supervision of at least two (2) and no more than six (6) marriage and family therapy associates; and

(iii) ~~(5) submit~~ evidence of a minimum of three (3) semester hours of graduate study in supervision or training approved by the Board.

ARTICLE 4

Continuing Education

36‑16. Continuing Education Requirements for Professional Counselors, Addiction Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists.

(1) Persons licensed as professional counselors, addiction counselors, or marriage and family therapists shall complete forty (40) hours of Board‑approved continuing education, of which thirty‑~~four~~three (3~~4~~3) hours must be related to their respective professional license, one hour must be in suicide assessment, treatment and management treatment, and six (6) hours must be specific to ethical standards related to their respective professional license during every two‑year licensure period. A first‑time licensee is not required to obtain continuing education for the licensing period in which the initial license was obtained. After this first renewal, the continuing education requirements shall apply. Persons holding more than one license must complete fifty (50) hours of continuing education during every two‑year licensure period as a condition of renewal of their licenses. Of the fifty (50) hours, six (6) hours must be specific to ethical standards, one hour must be in suicide assessment, treatment, and management treatment, and the remaining forty‑~~four~~three (4~~4~~3) hours divided as equally as possible among the related disciplines. Persons licensed as professional counselor supervisors, addiction counselor supervisors, or marriage and family therapy supervisors must complete ten (10) hours of continuing education in supervision of their discipline during every two‑year licensure period as a condition of renewal of their license. Persons holding multiple supervision licenses must complete ten (10) hours of continuing education in supervision, dividing the hours as equally as possible among each discipline.

(2) Any continuing education program sponsored by a professional counselor certifying body, addiction counselor certifying body, marriage and family therapy certifying body, or body approved by the Board as a continuing education sponsoring body, or one of its regional or state divisions, is automatically approved.

(3) Unapproved sponsoring organizations must request advance approval on Board‑approved forms ninety (90) days prior to each continuing education event. In order to request approval, the sponsoring organization must submit an agenda of the session, the curriculum vitae of all presenters and a copy of the evaluation documents.

(4) Continuing education hours may be obtained through continuing education programs and activities provided by Board‑approved continuing education providers, or licensees may obtain up to twenty (20) hours of the required continuing education per two‑year licensure period by completing one or more of the following:

(a) a first time presentation of a paper, workshop, or seminar for a national, regional, statewide, or other professional meeting may be approved for a maximum of five (5) continuing education hours; and

(b) a published paper in a referred journal may be approved for a maximum of five (5) continuing education hours and may be used only once; and

(c) preparation of a new or related course for an educational institution or organization may be approved for a maximum of five (5) continuing education hours; and

(5) No hours may be carried forward from the renewal period in which they were earned.

(6) Continuing education credit may be obtained in person or obtained online.

36‑17. Continuing Education Requirements for Psycho‑educational Specialists.

(1) Persons licensed as psycho‑educational specialists shall complete forty (40) hours of continuing education of which thirty‑~~four~~three (3~~4~~3) hours must be related to their respective professional license, one hour must be in suicide assessment, treatment, and management treatment, and six (6) hours must be specific to ethical standards related to their respective professional license during every two‑year licensure period. Persons licensed as a psycho‑educational specialist and a professional counselor, marriage and family therapist and/or an addiction counselor must complete at least fifty (50) hours of formal continuing education during every two‑year licensure period as a condition of renewal of their licenses. Of the fifty (50) hours, six (6) hours must be specific to ethical standards related to their respective professional license, one must be in suicide assessment, treatment, and management treatment, and the remaining forty‑~~four~~three (4~~4~~3) hours should be divided as equally as possible among the related disciplines.

(2) Continuing education credit may be obtained in person or online.

(3) Continuing education credit for psycho‑educational specialists may be awarded for documented completion of the following activities:

(a) a minimum of twenty (20) continuing education hours in workshops, conferences, formal in‑service training, college or university courses, and teaching and training activities. A maximum of ten (10) hours may be awarded for attendance at workshops, conferences, or in‑service training. For teaching and training activities, credit may be awarded only for the first time the content is taught and limited to a maximum of ten (10) hours; or

(b) a maximum of twenty (20) continuing education hours in research and publications, supervision of associates, post‑graduate supervised experiences, program planning/evaluation, self‑study, and professional organizational leadership. A maximum of ten (10) hours may be awarded for unpublished research. A maximum of twenty (20) hours may be awarded for research and publication or presentation. A maximum of ten (10) hours may be awarded for articles published or posters presented. Each project may be claimed only once. A maximum of twenty (20) hours may be awarded for supervision of associates. No more than one (1) post‑graduate supervised experience may be claimed in any renewal period. A maximum of fifteen (15) hours may be awarded for program planning/evaluation. A maximum of twenty (20) hours may be awarded for self‑study. No more than one (1) activity may be counted per organization per year and a maximum of ten (10) hours may be awarded in professional organization leadership.

**Fiscal Impact Statement:**

There will be no cost incurred by the State or any of its political subdivisions for these regulations.

**Statement of Rationale:**

The Board of Examiners for Licensure of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, Addiction Counselors and Psycho‑Educational Specialists proposes to its regulations regarding licensure requirements to clarify the requirement for at least a 60‑hour graduate degree and to strike the grandfathering provision that is no longer needed. Similar changes are proposed for licensed professional supervisors to allow those with doctoral degrees a more direct pathway to licensure as a supervisor. The regulation also adds an hour of continuing education in suicide assessment, treatment and management treatment to conform to Act 158 of the 2024 legislative session.