

Who Are the Board's Licensees?

The Board of Behavioral Sciences (Board) licenses four types of mental health professionals:

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs)
- Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEPs)
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs)
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs)

Here is a brief description of what each does, and their qualifications:

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs)¹

A Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, commonly referred to as an LMFT, is a licensed mental health provider who provides psychotherapy and related services to individuals, couples, families, and groups. LMFTs are trained to evaluate, diagnose, and treat mental and emotional disorders, behavioral issues, and a wide range of relationship dynamics that disrupt interpersonal family relationships. An LMFT employs a variety of therapeutic approaches, including, but not limited to, family systems theories and techniques when working with individuals, couples, families, and groups.

An LMFT in California has earned a qualifying master's or doctoral degree from an educational institution accredited by a regional or national accreditor recognized by the United States Department of Education, and/or approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, and/or accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). Their training and education hone the skills needed to work in various diverse settings such as private practices, government entities, and health care organizations such as hospitals, non-profits, and educational institutions. An LMFT may provide services as a solo practitioner, or they may work as part of a team with other authorized healing arts professionals that work jointly to address a patient's needs.

The scope of practice for LMFTs is defined in California law in Business and Professions Code section [4980.02](#).

¹ This description was provided by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT).

Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEPs)²

Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEPs) focus on the intersection between mental health, learning, behavior, and educational success. They work with students and families in public schools, universities, private practice, and as consultants. At a minimum they hold a master's degree and have worked as a School Psychologist with a Pupil Personnel Services Credential for at least two years. Many also hold advanced specialist or doctoral degrees. LEPs are specially trained to provide educationally related mental health services, including providing counseling for students, parents, and families; and managing crises, such as suicidal ideation and threats of violence. LEPs conduct program evaluations to assist schools, districts, and other stakeholders in assessing the effectiveness of educational programs. They also conduct individual evaluations for and diagnosis of disabilities affecting student success; develop treatment programs to ensure student success; and work with families and educators to address students' need with the ultimate goal of educational and lifelong success.

The scope of practice for LEPs is defined in California law in Business and Professions Code section [4989.14](#).

Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs)³

There are two types of social workers: clinical and non-clinical. The Board only licenses clinical social workers. Under current law, a license is not required to be a non-clinical social worker.

In order to qualify for licensure as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), a social worker must have a master's degree (MSW) in social work from a school accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education. Clinical social work is a specialty practice area of social work which focuses on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illness, emotional, and other behavioral disturbances. Individual, group and family therapy are common treatment modalities, though not the only ones used.

LCSWs work to improve their client's overall well-being and quality of life and are trained to identify and address social, economic, cultural, and psychological issues that affect people's lives. They are also trained to advocate for social justice and promote policies and programs that help address systemic and social inequities. LCSWs may work in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, mental health clinics, government agencies, community-based organizations and private practice.

The scope of practice for LCSWs is defined in California law in Business and Professions Code section [4996.9](#).

² This description was provided by the California Association of School Psychologists (CASP).

³ This description was provided by the National Association of Social Workers – California Chapter (NASW-CA).

Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs)⁴

Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs) provide care for individuals, couples, families, and groups with a variety of concerns, such as relationship concerns, life challenges, and the diagnosis and treatment of mental health and substance abuse use disorders. Through therapy, counselors work with clients to develop meaningful changes; identifying goals and potential solutions to concerns in their lives. These may include improved interpersonal communication, relationships, coping skills, self-esteem, grief and loss, effecting positive changes, and promoting mental health.

The primary purpose of counseling is to empower the client to deal adequately with these life situations, reduce stress, experience personal growth, and make well-informed, rational decisions. According to the American Counseling Association, “Professional counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals” (American Counseling Association, 2022).

LPCCs work in a variety of settings, including community behavioral health clinics, substance use treatment centers, hospitals, K-12 schools and higher educational institutions, employee assistance programs, federal agencies such as the VA, in private practice and non-profit based organizations (American Counseling Association, 2022).

LPCCs must have either a master’s or doctorate degree (that includes 700 hours of supervised practice as a student) in counseling or psychotherapy, and must complete extensive post-degree supervised experience.

The scope of practice for LPCCs is defined in California law in Business and Professions Code section [4999.20](#).

⁴ This description was provided by the California Association for Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (CALPCC).